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LETTERS

TO

A YOUNG LADY,

IN WHICH

THE DUTIES AND CHARACTER OF WOMEN
ARE CONSIDERED,

CHIEFLY WITH

A REFERENCE TO PREVAILING OPINIONS.

BY MRS WEST,

AUTHOR OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG MAN, &c.

*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that
feareth the Lord she shall be praised.*

Prov. xxxi. 30.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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LETTERS,

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LETTER VI.

*Further Observations on the Calvinistic
Controversy.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

IN justice to our opponents, we must now acknowledge, that the doctrines of Calvin, arrayed in all their original horrors, are too sombrous for the adoption of all who arrange themselves under his *distinguishing* banner. A more limited (and we must add indistinct) idea of predestination is entertained by many who, in the present

VOL. II. B times,

times, assume the title of moderate Calvinists. As these seceders seem rather inclined to dispute with us for words than for things, and are in many respects highly valuable members of Christianity, we are in this instance rather called upon to lament infirmity, than to reprobate gross error. A desire of being wiser above what is written, a contentious spirit, and the absence of clear ideas, are failings which we should seek to remedy in ourselves, and meekly endeavour to reform in others.

Our ablest logicians affirm, that the phrase moderate Calvinism * is a solecism ; that this system must be adopted

* Some explain moderate Calvinism to mean people who hold the doctrine of absolute predestination themselves, but do not consider such belief to be necessary to salvation, or an essential article of Christian faith. Some explain it to be, only holding parts of that reformer's singular opinions.

wholly,

wholly, or totally rejected; that without reprobates, no meaning can be assigned to the word elect; and that without human agency, there can be no virtue. I am not equal to these niceties of disputation; it is sufficient for my purpose, that the above appellation is adopted by many, who use it as the sign of their dissent from the great body of the established church. To me it appears a distinction without a difference; or rather, that the disputed points are of such a metaphysical subtile nature, as to elude the research of ordinary understandings.

It is not my wish to lead you into a maze of controversy; but only to guard you against all schismatical persuasives, which may come recommended by the imposing names of seriousness and extraordinary piety, or of more profound gospel knowledge. Instead of proscribing piety and seriousness, our church requires them

them from all her members; she has appointed offices for morning and evening prayer; and she commemorates every festival connected with Christianity, either in relation to its mysteries, or to the example of its primitive worthies. So far from withholding the Scriptures from the congregation, she enjoins the frequent use of them to all her members, and she prays, that they may not only “read,” but “mark, learn, and inwardly digest” them.” If, therefore, we really are in search of piety, virtue, and knowledge, we need not wander from her fold.

It is true, our Church rejects all similitude to the boastful merit of the Pharisee, on whatever pretext that merit is supposed to be founded. She admits no positive judging of the religious state of others, further than as their actions speak their hearts; and she encourages us to direct our attention to our own lives as well

well as principles. . She requires great modesty of judgment on abstruse and mysterious points, especially as to what relates to our spiritual condition, or to the manner in which divine grace is conveyed to the soul ; and it must be confessed, she expects her members rather to be *learners* and *bearers*, than *expostulators* and *expounders* ; that they should be clothed with humility, instead of self-sufficiency ; and that they should submit themselves to their “ spiritual pastors and “ masters,” instead of cavilling at those who “ watch over them in the Lord.”—

What passes for spiritual gifts in the eyes of many, she esteems the folly of “ curious and carnal men ;” and to the long tautological extemporaneous effusions of over-weening confidence, she opposes her formularies, conceived “ in obedience to the sober counsels of the Rôyal “ Preacher :” Be not “ rash with thy “ mouth,

“ mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty
 “ to utter any thing before God.”

In another point she is also decided ; I mean as to the independency of her ministers ; who, “ being stewards of the “ mysteries of God,” derive their commission from him, and certainly ought not to be amenable to the congregation whom they are ordained to instruct, and from whom they are not to withhold what is profitable. The liberty of choosing their own instructors, or, what is tantamount, of deserting their parochial church, if it be occupied by a clergyman whose manner of preaching they dislike, is asserted by most moderate Calvinists ; who, while they affect respect for the hierarchy, claim a degree of licence for its lay members inconsistent with the regular subordination on which it is founded ; and degrade a spiritual function, by judging it with the
 same

same rules of preference and inclination as they apply to temporal occupations. The greatest law authority in this kingdom has just given a public opinion on the inexpediency of officiating clergymen being elected by parochial ballot; by which means, in the first instance, a parish is sure to be rendered the seat of contention and cabal. And with what lamentable impediments must the successful candidate commence his sacred functions, in a congregation among whom he has been the engine of discord before he can attempt to be the minister of peace! Can the word of charity and holiness be received with due effect, by those whom the eager zeal of a popular contest has prepared rather to cavil than to obey? What opinion should we form of a school, that recommended itself to public attention by an assurance that the boys should be permitted

B. 4 to

to choose their instructors*, and decide upon the propriety of rewards and punishments? A congregation *electing* the teacher who shall distribute to them the word and bread of life, is not less contradictory to the sober notions of ecclesiastical gradation; for it must be recollected, that, though some of its members may be in reality enlightened Christians, the deciding majority are ignorant, and consequently exposed to the errors and prejudices of ignorance. ~~The very idea of needing instruction, implies the unfitness of choosing a teacher;~~ if we already know, why do we ask to be taught? if we are adequate judges of the degree or kind of information that we want, we have advanced beyond the bounds of pupilage.

* Absurd as this suggestion must seem, it was *seriously* proposed by a philosophical reformer, as a likely means of *improving* our national system of education.

Beside,

Beside, must not these spiritual guides, who owe their elevation to their popularity, feel, that a "breath may unmake them, as a breath has made?" and will they not lie under a strong temptation to act like the feeble-minded prophets of Judah, when the people called upon them to "prophecy unto them smooth things," and thus preach the lying words of vanity, instead of the law of God? When we consider the manifest danger that must result to faith and morals from thus transposing the situations of tuition and obedience, making powerless precept depend on dominating pupilage, we must rejoice that a very small part of the establishment is at present subject to this inverted rule of patronage, and sincerely pray that *moderate* Calvinism may ever want power to increase the number of *dependent* clergymen.

A. S.

I will.

I will pass the subject of itinerance in public worship with a brief observation*. It is one of the evils that arise from confounding the ideas of the civil licence which toleration has given us, with our spiritual freedom as Christians. The law of England says, "though offices of high trust and responsibility can only be delegated to those who are professedly members of the established church, you are permitted to worship God in whatever way your conscience dictates, without fear of molestation." The gospel enjoins us to avoid "heresies and contentions;" it prescribes obedience to those who "rule over us in the Lord;" it bids us mark those who "cause divisions among us;" and it represents schism as a most serious offence. We *may* therefore choose what teacher we will

* This subject is more copiously treated in a former publication of the Author's.

follow :

follow : no *physical* inability prevents us from so doing ; nor is any *temporal* penalty attached to the offence ; but if we choose unadvisedly, or from any sinister motive, we exercise this freedom at the peril of our own souls. Wandering from our parish church in search of a palatable preacher, is perhaps one of the least culpable methods of exercising this supposed right ; but the breaking of any mental barrier is like the letting out of waters. When once we depart from that humility and regularity which we are enjoined to revere, no one can say at what degree of scepticism or fanaticism we shall finally arrive.

These wanderings are generally justified on the score of a love of edification. When the pretence of edification leads the congregation of a sound, learned, and pious divine, to follow those who distinguish themselves by the appellation of

Gospel-preachers, I confess myself at a loss to understand in what sense they apply this term; for it is well known, that these orators delight to expatiate on *God's part* of the covenant of grace in such strong language, as to induce a suspicion that they mean to represent man as a passive agent. The topics on which they chiefly treat, are those referred to in the second book of our articles; which are rather rendered more abstruse, than explained, by diffusive expositions; and which, when taught to unlearned Christians, should never be separately enforced, but delivered as a whole; one tenet limiting and explaining another. Sermons of this description are also very apt to be mystical and parabolical, full of abrupt transitions and rhapsodical addresses to the passions of their hearers; and we very frequently meet a scantiness of moral instruction, if not a systematic exclusion of the

the obligations of Christian obedience. If we add to these faults, the verbosity and repetition which distinguish these harangues, we must conclude that they really are difficult to be understood by unlearned hearers. A learned divine observes, "that he never listened to a preacher of this description, without reflecting how very different their manner is from that of Christ and his Apostles, whose discourses were also generally addressed to the multitude." Clearness, comprehensiveness, and persuasive instruction, were (as might be expected) the tokens of that peculiar inspiration which accompanied the Divine Founder and first promulgators of our faith; and if after the lapse of eighteen centuries, notwithstanding the disadvantages which must attend that dissimilarity of manner, climates, custom, and language, under which we now receive the sacred canon, we feel our hearts

hearts burn within us at the perusal, what must have been their power of affecting those to whom they were first addressed ! Well might the word of God be then compared to a two-edged sword, piercing the reins and the heart.

The embarrassment which unlearned preachers evidently feel, when they attempt to make abstruse doctrines familiar to ignorant minds, may tempt one to say to them, “ Understandest thou what thou teachest ? ” A favourite topic with them is, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the redeemed, and our sins to him. This doctrine, which Dr. Hey rightly terms wholly inconceivable, “ *is not supported by the express words of Scripture,* ” and is a human refinement upon the atonement of Christ, that great key-stone of our religion ; proceeding upon the supposition, that a just God would not punish an innocent or pardon a guilty

a guilty person; therefore; as mankind were all sinners, and are yet forgiven; and as Christ, though perfectly spotless, was offered up for us, he not only " bore " our infirmities and became a curse for " us," but our offences were actually *attributed* to him, and our spotted garments were not merely washed in his blood, but we are also attired in the robes of *his* righteousness. Your intimate acquaintance with the sacred volume will shew you how much human subtilty has refined upon the simplicity of Scripture; deducing *doctrines* from the figurative language of ardent devotion or prophetic fervour, which even go beyond the glowing colours of the enraptured original. The preacher who enters on this difficult and (I conceive) unedifying topic; ought to possess a clear head, a sound judgement, great precision of expression, and command of language, in order to convince

convince his unlettered auditors that there is an unfurmountable distinction between *imputed* and *inherent* righteousness, and that they may as easily discard the covering of their Redeemer's merits, as renounce the benefits of his passion. The orator should also recollect, that when once he exceeds the limit of Scripture, he is in danger of approaching the confines of blasphemy; and that while he exalts the humility of the Lamb of God, he must also remember that he was a holy, undefiled, and spotless sacrifice. In speaking of doctrines above our comprehensions, the language of Scripture should be preferred; and though this authorizes us to say the "Lord our righteousness," surely we exceed our warrant when we affirm that his personal obedience is attributed to us. Christ is made unto us, "wisdom," as well as "righteousness."

“righteousness* :” does this text authorize us to claim the omniscience of our Saviour? I should answer, in the same sense as it does his holiness.

Our Church has not admitted this idea of imputation into her offices, or articles. Dr. Hey, in explaining the sentence, “accounted righteous before God,” distinguishes between being “accounted,” and “being made righteous †.” It is a leading idea in many devotional tracts composed as preparatory to the Sacrament; but is not admitted into the sound and masterly composition of Bishop Wilson on that subject. It was much amplified in the works of the late Mr. James Hervey, who should rather be termed a *devotional poet* than an *instructive divine*. Indeed, it is more like a poetical idea.

* 1st Corinthians, 1st chapter, 30th verse.

† Hey's Lectures, vol. 3d, page 268.

than an article of belief; and, though it may warm an ardent imagination, seems incapable of practical application. When united with the Calvinistic doctrine of election, it is extremely dangerous, tending to confirm spiritual self-sufficiency, and all the extravagance of religious frenzy. To know that our Blessed Lord suffered to redeem us, must sufficiently inspire abhorrence of sin, and gratitude to the Redeemer, without entertaining those confusing notions of alternate imputation which confound every idea of identity and responsibility. When Jesus poured forth his blood upon the cross, he did an action highly acceptable to his Heavenly Father, and was no more *guilty* than the pardoned thief became *innocent* by our Saviour's promising to admit him into Paradise. Omnipotence has no power over the *past*. Sins once committed cannot be unperformed. The penitent was forgiven,

given, on account of his extraordinary faith in the great act of expiation which he was admitted to witness, and enabled to discern. In the language of Scripture, "his robes were washed in the blood of the Lamb;" but it is in his own robes of *inherent* righteousness that Christ pleads for us at the mercy-seat of God *.

Another favourite practice of these preachers is, to introduce a philippic against morality, under the term of "the filthy rags of our own righteousness." This metaphorical expression is adopted from the Prophet Isaiah, who was then lamenting the gross corruption and ap-

* There is a text in Revelations which seems to disprove the tenet of imputed righteousness; but I speak as an English reader ignorant of the original language: it occurs in the 19th chapter, 8th verse, where the heavenly spouse (or the Church) is described as attired "in the righteousness of the Saints."

proaching.

proaching dissolution of the Jewish Church. By comparing the 6th verse of the 64th chapter, with the 57th and 58th chapters; we shall find, that the Jews called the outward ceremonial observances of the law by the name of righteousness, and expected justification from fasts and sacrifices, while they went on in the practice of every atrocious wickedness *. Well might the prophet, in his penitentiary addresses to Heaven, call such obedience by the name of "filthiness;" and all his earnest expostulations "to put away the evil of their doings, to cease to do evil, to learn to do well," clearly point out that he had no intention to decry *moral observance*. If the context were regarded, the text might be used as an admonition to those who neglect their duties, and their honest callings, to listen to florid unedifying

* See also the 1st chapter of Isaiah.

harangues. When this quotation is introduced without any explanation of the sense in which it should be applied, it may be called a declamation against all the social virtues; and, instead of being an effort to save souls from Satan, is indeed an attempt to extend his empire.

They who wish to have their offences excused, rather than eradicated, are often allured from their regular minister by the exonerating explanations of those who enlarge the doctrine, that man has no power “to come to God unless he is drawn by him*,” till they utterly abolish human responsibility. That we are “unable of ourselves to help ourselves,” is a truth which even the dim light of natural religion discovered. “In God we live, and move, and have our being.” On God we depend for health, life, prosperity, and

* See Remarks on the Lambeth Articles, Letter the 5th.

understanding.

understanding. But as in our natural life our dependance on the Deity does not supersede human exertion, so in our spiritual existence our best endeavours must co-operate with the divine influence. To say that "we are unable of ourselves to help ourselves," is a devout acknowledgement of the dependance of creatures who feel that the powers of motion and reflexion depend upon the will of the Creator; who can in an instant suspend the operation of every animal function or mental organ, as easily as he can interrupt the ordinary routine of inert nature. But because miracles have sometimes happened, we are not to expect their frequent recurrence in the natural world; nor because there have been singular interpositions of divine grace, and extraordinary conversions, are we allowed "to dash our foot against a stone," in expectation of angelical interference; nor

nor to “tempt the Lord our God,” in assurance that he will *draw* us into the fold of faith.

The manner in which divine prescience influences human free will, is an undiscovered mystery, to which probably our present faculties are not equal; but no one ever omitted a duty, or yielded to a vice, without *feeling* that they had a *power* of *observing* the commandment, or *avoiding* the transgression. When a man's understanding is so far enlightened as to know his duty, he may certainly be said to be drawn of God. A superior intellect may perhaps possess sufficient acuteness to discover a difference between that fore-knowledge which discerns, and that which propels, and may also perceive that they feel in themselves that power of choosing which is an indisputable evidence of the justice of God. Such persons may not find it dangerous to push their inquiries

quiries into these subtile (and we must add unprofitable) speculations; but the edification of a popular audience cannot be promoted, by *confining* their instruction to the obvious truth, that they can neither serve God nor Man unless God enables them so to do. This doctrine (which is but another way of saying, that we can neither walk nor breathe without Almighty permission) should always be coupled with an assurance, that God enables all who are sincerely desirous of so doing “to work out their own salvation, or we refer our own perverse courses to the Author of our existence, and make the holy, wise, and just God culpable for our wilful reprobation. For, if we had no power to do right, how can we be said to do wrong? or how are we responsible for the misuse of a talent that we never possessed? Surely the perverseness of human nature cannot be more strongly shewn than

than by thus turning the omnipotence of God into a cloak for sin. If our opponents plead Scripture in support of their opinions, we must here, as in other cases, bid them look at the *whole* Scripture; for, in order to prevent this truth from being pushed into a dangerous extreme, it is fenced in by every moral precept and persuasive to holiness, which uniformly admit the free agency of man, by supposing him capable of “choosing good” and refusing evil.”

Our absolute dependence upon God, both for spiritual and temporal good, is inculcated to give ardour to our devotion and spirituality to our thoughts; not to paralyse the efforts of piety, virtue, and industry. Saving grace is given to all who implore it; and they who know this, yet do not ask for this blessing, “resist the Spirit of God,” and deserve the condemnation which will be their portion.

Connected with the preceding doctrines, are the favourite methodistical tenets, that Christ has done all for us, and that the human heart is utterly depraved. This last doctrine is said to be the foundation of humility; but humility is described as thinking “soberly” of itself; and surely, to suppose ourselves utterly vile and diabolical cannot consist with sobriety of judgement; for from such a corrupt tree good fruit cannot be expected. Humility is founded on a consideration of our own individual demerits, and not on the weakness or imperfection of the order of creatures to which we belong. But, lest you should suspect the validity of my unauthorised opinion, I will sanction my sentiments by the introduction of a justly-venerated name. “It is no act of humiliation,” says Bishop Taylor, “to confess a crime that all the world are equally guilty of, that could not have
“ been

“ been avoided by our timeliest industry,
 “ and that serves for so many ends in the
 “ excuse and minoration of our actual
 “ impieties; so that, as Diogenes trampled
 “ upon the pride of Plato with a greater
 “ fastuousness and humourous ostenta-
 “ tion, so do we with original sin, de-
 “ claim against it bitterly, to save the
 “ other harmless; and are free in the
 “ publication of this, that we may be in-
 “ structed to conceal the actual. We
 “ charge our guilt upon Adam,” con-
 tinues he, “ to lessen the imputation upon
 “ us, or to increase the licence or the
 “ confidence; when every one of us is
 “ the Adam, the man of sin, and the
 “ parent of our own impurities; what-
 “ ever mischief Adam did to us, we do
 “ more to ourselves*.” It will scarcely
 be insinuated, that Jeremy Taylor was

* Life of Christ, pages 37 and 38.

infected with the Pelagian heresy ; that he insisted on the doctrine of self-justification, or doubted the necessity of a Saviour. But he lived in times which afforded most lamentable examples of the effects of pushing scriptural doctrines too far ; an error which the primitive reformers unquestionably fell into, in their zeal for opposing the Romish doctrine of man's merits, which at that age was generally understood to mean such superstitious services and observances as bore a near resemblance to what the prophet Isaiah justly decried in his admonitions to the corrupted church of Israel. But, as justification by faith, if it be enforced without its correlative restriction, of the necessity of good works, must inculcate Antinomian licentiousness ; so if the preacher insists on human corruption, further than to convince his hearers of the necessity of a Saviour and a Sanctifier, he gives them

an

an *excuse* for their sins, instead of a *motive* to vanquish them. It is true, many passages in Scripture describe, in vivid colours, the taint which mankind received by the fall of their ancestor ; but it is likewise true, that the same Scripture as strongly and clearly represents every individual offender as the author of his own destruction, and the victim of his own vices. Are we then to employ Scripture to combat Scripture, and thus engage the members of Christ in eternal controversy ? No ; surely these seemingly opposite passages were inserted in the sacred volume to *preserve us from falling into extremes of opinion*. A text that asserts our free agency, is intended to be our barrier against believing absolute predestination ; and we can have no stronger proof, that we must not take the “ desperate wickedness of man ” in its strongest sense, than the assurance that we are ca-
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pable

pable of “becoming good and faithful
“servants of God.”

In the heat of controversy (as I before observed), many of our great reformers made use of expressions, which even the bold figures of oriental imagery scarcely justified them in adopting. I can nowhere find in holy writ, that at the fall
“Adam lost the image of God, and be-
“came the image of the Devil; that,
“instead of the citizen of Heaven, he
“became the bond-slave of Hell, having
“in himself no one part of his former
“purity and cleanness, but being alto-
“gether spotted and defiled; inasmuch
“that he now seemed to be nothing but
“a lump of sin, and therefore, by the
“just judgement of God, was condemned
“to everlasting death*.” If this de-

* Homily on Salvation. In reading controversial works, we should carefully distinguish between rhetoric and argument.

scription

Scripture refer to the *natural individual* Adam, it is most certainly contradicted by Scripture, where the father of the human race is represented as a sinner, but as a reprieved contrite sinner, depending upon the divine promise*, full of hope in the God who had punished him, and favoured (as we may infer from the 4th of Genesis, 14th verse) with *special* manifestations of the Deity. And since Scripture has no where told us what was the final fate of this eminent offender, with whom the covenant of mercy was first made, it is highly indecorous in us to presume to explain "Death" in any other than its temporal sense. Rather let us hope that, like all his redeemed offspring, the first Adam will be made alive by the second.

• Observe the names of his children.

If Adam be spoken of metaphorically in the above passage, as the representative of mankind, we have Scripture proof that even the gross corruption and extreme wickedness of the antediluvian world did not efface the image of God in man*. The "*righteousness*" of Abel is acknowledged by an apostle†; and of Enoch it is expressly said, that "he pleased God ‡." If it be urged, that it was faith which entitled these worthies to this exalted eulogium, my argument is not weakened; for I consider faith as a virtue which is produced by our co-operating with the grace of God, and not an extraneous quality forcibly superinduced into a passive machine by an over-ruling power. Is it not charging God foolishly, when we give these dark colourings to human nature?

* Genesis, 9th chap. 6th verse.

† Hebrews, 11th chap. verse 4th.

‡ Ibid. verse 5th.

for if man be so utterly vile and diabolical, has not God been partial in excluding Satan and his rebel host from the *possibility* of salvation? Why are they reserved in chains and darkness to the judgement of the great day, and man permitted to rejoice in the mercies of a Saviour?

The guilt of self-righteousness, cannot be charged upon the belief that God has given us a nature capable of obeying him, or in affirming that, notwithstanding our hereditary debasement, it is still possible for us so to do; for, whether this power of serving God be derived from nature, or from the assisting grace of God, the glory is still his, as he is our Creator and Sanctifier. The most offensive species of self-righteousness must be incurred by attributing to ourselves what we deny to our fellow-creatures; and believing that we are the chosen vessels, into which God's spiritual blessings are largely poured;

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while

while others, though their *external* conduct seems as pious and correct as our own, are reprobated as formalists and slaves of perdition:

We may call upon Calvinists, and Semi-Calvinists, to explain how they can expect the Christian grace of humility will spring out of a soil that tends to engender those excuses for sin which prevent the sense of contrition. I cannot be humbled by the recollection of sins which I could not avoid; but if, knowing that I was “made a little lower than the angels,” and intended to be “crowned with glory and worship,” I have sold “myself to work all uncleanness with greediness,” I am indeed self-degraded, and must seem vile in my own eyes. “The confession of original sin,” says the venerable prelate whom I have just quoted, “is no imitation of Christ’s humility in
“suffering

“ suffering circumcision ”; but too often
 “ an act of pride, carelessness, and se-
 “ curity.”

You see that in the opinion of this truly evangelical author, it is dangerous, instead of edifying, to inculcate a belief of *original*, without endeavouring to awaken the conscience to a sense of *actual* depravity. The divines of our Church must, if they conform to her doctrines and offices, teach their flock, that, with power to stand upright, man has a natural propensity to fall; but the consciousness of this weakness should make us fly to the mercies of Him for whose sake imperfect obedience will be accepted, if it be the willing service of a sincere mind; but since we are unable even to do this of ourselves, we should, “ by diligent and fervent prayer,” implore that “ special”

* Life of Christ, page 39. Bishop Taylor is then meditating on Christ's circumcision.

or peculiar grace which will make us
 “ continually given to all good works ;”
 which supplications we are encouraged to
 offer by the assurance that God “ is ever
 “ more ready to hear than we to pray.”

This view of human agency, and divine
 assistance, corresponds with experience,
 and is sanctioned by Scripture. Every
 terror or uneasiness which wicked men
 feel when they commit sin, tells them that
 they might have avoided the crime at
 which they shudder to look back ; they
 are also proofs, that even in its most
 faulty copies human nature retains some
 remnant of its original purity ; and that
 when we break through the barriers of
 conscience, we participate in the guilt, as
 well as in the punishment of Adam ; who
 like ourselves was “ free to stand or fall,”
 though it is supposed that his inclinations
 did not so powerfully incline him to evil,
 nor did his passions rise in such strong oppo-
 sition

sition to his intellectual faculties. Every exhortation in the New Testament which enjoins us “to make our calling and “election sure,” to walk “worthy of “the vocation whereunto we are called,” and “to strive for the prize of our high “calling which is in Christ Jesus,” alike proves the mixed nature of man, and that the merits of Christ will only be applied to those who do not resist the Spirit of God.

The extravagant expressions by which Calvinistic teachers disgust sober hearers, and captivate or astonish weak minds, often proceed from an injudicious imitation or erroneous application of scriptural phraseology. Allegorical allusions, types, and parables, formed a mode of instruction which was used by our Lord with remarkable clearness and effect. It was peculiarly suited to the customs of Eastern nations; but our great dissimilarity
in

in manners renders the propriety of similar apologues in this kingdom questionable ; I mean as a popular method of instructing the ignorant ; for there can be no doubt of the suitability of apposite allusion, and picturesque similitude, when we address our discourses to those who are competently informed. Whenever the allegorical and figurative style is adopted, perspicuity, precision, and appropriateness, are indispensable, especially when it is applied to a passage of Scripture ; otherwise the text is darkened, not elucidated, by the designed explanation. A volume of sermons lies before me, from which I will quote an instance of what I call strained similitude and perverted allegory.—The author fancies that at the remarkable appearance of the Almighty which is recorded in the nineteenth chapter of the first book of Kings, “ the small still voice ” in which God only was to be found.

found was an *emblem* of the virtue of humility ; and that storms and tempests, earthquakes and lightnings, were the anti-types of moral commotions, blustering passions, and political revolutions, because these latter were brought about by the agency of the prince of the power of the air. This is *imagination*, not *instruction*. Who can grow wiser or better, by listening to such reveries ?

It is most certain, that the coming of our blessed Lord, and the great events of his life, were typified by many analogous events that are recorded in the old testament. This similitude was intended as a preparatory mode of instruction, to fit the Jews for the appearance of the Messiah. It is observed, that Christianity makes no use of types, because it leads to no future dispensation. A strong fancy, when it is not restrained by an equally sound judgement, may multiply resemblances between
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the Old and New Testament, or, what is still more prejudicial, between the important events which they record, and the common incidents of life ; till what was in itself serious and awful becomes ludicrous, and a theme for prophane wit. “ Lectures on Scripture Characters ” appear to me not wholly free from the censure of overstrained allusion, or from the charge of sentimental refinements on the noble simplicity of holy writ. When the humour of typifying and allegorizing is unrestrained by learning or genius, the consequences are most lamentable ; for Scripture is thus converted into a bye-word of reproach among the profligate. We should reflect, that though fantastical hearers always think that sermon the best which they can least understand, it is *impossible* that they can be edified by what they cannot *comprehend*. What imagination can figure to itself any idea of
Death

Death and Hell conquered, as being one of the dishes that shall be served up “at the feast of fat things,” which the prophet Isaiah mentions as prepared by God for his chosen people? Who can suppose, that Abigail falling at the feet of David, prefigured Mary anointing the feet of Christ; or, that the two thieves between whom Christ was crucified were types of Lucifer and Adam?

I once questioned a rather intelligent person in low life, respecting the purport of a discourse which had been just delivered by a clergyman who affected to be distinguished as a Gospel preacher. I was told, that they were ordered to “kick away the thorns and briars which lay in their road to Heaven.” I inquired whether these thorns and briars were supposed to mean their cares, their sorrows, or their sins; and was answered, that the gentleman “did not tell them what they were.”

“were.” This is a proof, that whoever admits these sorts of decorations, should take care that the *comprehension* of their hearers keeps pace with the fallies of their own *imagination*s.

I shall here perhaps be told, that the holy Spirit will assist the influence of the word of God, and cause it to operate on the heart and life of the true believer. I answer, that since the miracles which established Christianity have ceased, the method by which God seeks to convince us of sacred truths is by an appeal to our understandings. The sensible and apparent influences of the Holy Ghost, are a favourite theme with Calvinistic teachers. That the Divine Comforter assists all true worshippers, is a certain and most consolatory truth; but that we can distinguish his workings from the ordinary suggestions of our own minds, is an *unwarrantable inference*.

*inference**. Dr. Law, prebendary of Carlisle, in a sermon on the Limits of our Inquiries, observes—" Much perplexity
 " and infidelity have resulted from too
 " minute investigation, especially of three
 " points, which reason must ever in vain
 " attempt to resolve: First, concerning
 " the influence and operation of the Holy
 " Spirit. ' The Comforter,' says Christ,
 " is to abide with ye for ever.' " Yet
 " is there no passage in scripture which,
 " when *fairly interpreted*, will afford any
 " countenance to the opinions of those
 " who pretend to a sensible experience of

* The venerated name of Gisborne sanctions the above assertion. In a sermon on Religious Comfort he severely arraigns the methodistical tenet above referred to, and asks, " Where is your warrant to
 " place your confidence on an inward feeling; to
 " regard an indeterminate impulse as an impression
 " from the Holy Ghost, as a token and seal of for-
 " giveness?"

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“ the Spirit, an irresistible impulse, an
 “ immediate conversion, and who at-
 “ tempt to point out the exact line of
 “ partition between human efforts and
 “ divine illumination. This species of
 “ ignorance our Saviour seems to inti-
 “ mate in his discourse with Nicodemus,
 “ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and
 “ ye hear the sound thereof, but cannot
 “ tell whence it cometh, nor whither it
 “ goeth : so is every man that is born of
 “ the Spirit*.”

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* It is very evident, that the Apostles and Pro-
 phets were sensible of inspiration ; but the above
 observations only extend to those ordinary gifts of
 the Spirit which are promised to all Christians :
 such as enable us to bring forth the fruits of faith,
 and to secure our individual salvation ; not such as
 gave the founders of our religion power to convert
 heathen nations, and to spread the knowledge of the
 Lord over all the earth.

By the continual superintendence of the Spirit,
 the sacred penmen were furnished, in the gospels, in
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The other points, on which this learned divine censures the folly of too minute inquiry, are, attempting to reconcile human liberty with God's foreknowledge, and the mystery of the Trinity.

We must regret, that the desire of being wise above what is written, should induce many well-meaning people to perplex themselves, by endeavouring to discover the manner in which this mysterious similitude to a rushing wind acts upon the human heart. No subject has afforded an ampler field for ridicule, than those pretensions which go under the name of calls, experiences, and conversions, and which

the doctrinal parts of the epistles, and in the prophecies which they delivered, with that measure of inspiration which the nature of the subject required; so as to render their writings an infallible standard of Christian faith. As chosen ministers of the grace of God, their actions also were governed by a more immediate and over-ruling providence, than others can presume to expect.

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are so frequent among enthusiasts; and though I cannot allow, that even fanaticism, when really accompanied by sincerity, is a proper subject for ridicule, I cannot ascribe any merit to the wounded feelings of those who may rather be said to provoke obloquy by their absurdity, than to suffer persecution for their piety. This is not *enduring* the cross as a disciple of Jesus Christ, but *snatching* at it like a partizan of Swift's Jack. Whoever appeals to his inward feelings, removes the matter in debate from the jurisdiction of reason, and leaves it wholly dependant on his own veracity. Let him take care that his character will endure the scrutiny which his affectation of superior sanctity provokes. Let him remember too, that he is not now contending for the great truths of the gospel, in which dispute he would be supported by Scripture, but about an inward consciousness respecting which

which Scripture is *silent*, or (judging from the acknowledgement of the great apostle to the Gentiles) *hostile* to his pretensions. Though St. Paul was favoured by visions and revelations, and guided by the Spirit of God in a supereminent degree, these distinctions were not vouchsafed him for his own sake. His conversion was miraculous; but it was so ordained, in order that his authority among those to whom he was to preach the Gospel might be unquestioned. Even when he was near the close of his glorious labour, he appeared not to consider his own salvation as *certain*, but that he might still forfeit “the prize of his high calling,” and, “after having preached to others, “become a cast-away.” Previous to his appearance before Nero, he implores the prayers of his converts, that utterance might be given him; at other times he confesses himself uninspired; and in his exhortation

exhortation to the Centurion, that the soldiers should be prevented from escaping from the wreck, he intimates that even in miraculous interpositions the Deity works by the powers of nature, or by human agency. At other times St. Paul writes like one who was lifted out of the body, sensible of inspiration, gloying in unutterable visions, confident of future bliss, and anxious to depart this life, that he might be with his Lord. This is a lively and just picture of a pious mind, in which human weakness and religious fortitude alternately prevail; in which we sometimes see the persecuted and afflicted man, and at others the inspired Apostle. But to return from these, in some degree, digressive remarks (which will apply to other points of the contest that we are at present considering); when we allow for the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and the designed mystery

mystery, in which the awful subject of supernatural assistance is involved, we must own that the brightest understanding may err, if it attempt to ascertain when and where it acted under the immediate guidance of God ; to expatiate, therefore, on our capability of so doing, can no way edify a popular audience. The general statement, that God puts into our minds good desires, and that the Devil, our own corrupt inclinations, and the seductions of the world, tempt us to sin, appears to be as clear an account of this intricate business as it is requisite for us to give. If we would employ the time spent in such unprofitable disquisitions, which can only end in uncertainty and error, in earnest prayers to God that he would enable us to improve all godly motions, edification would be effectually promoted.

I proceed to another observation on the conduct of many dissenters from the establishment : I mean the comparatively little importance which they affix to the duty of prayer, especially if offered in a prescribed form of devotion. The sermon is the attraction to most itinerant hearers ; and if they can hurry into the distant sanctuary, where their favourite orator harangues, time enough to catch the honey dropping from his lips, they are content to omit their own indispensable duty, of offering the Christian sacrifice, by praying to the Lord God, Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who sanctified the sabbath for *his worship*. The number of those who go to church totally ignorant of Christianity, or of moral duty, is comparatively small ; yet the duty of publicly assembling ourselves together is incumbent upon *all*. Our better-informed ancestors knew,

knew, that *bearing* was not the principal occupation of the day of rest ; but, that instruction ought to be preceded and sanctified by holy supplication. The advantage of a set form of prayer, in which all may join with premeditated attention, is too obvious to be denied ; and when such a composition as our liturgy, for sense, copiousness, sublimity, and piety, solicits our preference, a composition compiled from the best devotional tracts of the ancient fathers, and from the pure rituals of early churches, aided by the labours of those exemplary founders of our own who became martyrs and confessors to the truths which they maintained ; surely it must be no ordinary self-sufficiency, no common portion of vanity and conceit, that can decry this admirable service as formal and cold, and prefer to it the rhapsodies of an extemporary preacher, who, in despite of Solomon's caution,

pours forth a torrent of words before his Creator. It is evident, that the congregation cannot join in these unpremeditated addresses ; for desire must precede request, and knowledge must go before assent. Edification, therefore, cannot be promoted, if prayer, the means by which God has promised to convey his Spirit to them who ask it, be omitted, or only performed by one person. Those who listen to the devotions of the preacher may be called *bearers of his word*, but not *the Word of God*. They imbibe the words of a man, who has confidence and vanity enough to think himself able to speak better things than the most diligent research into past times can collect. Here, again, we are called upon to lament that unfortunate rage for novelty which characterises the present times.

If you will trust my judgment, edification cannot be promoted by that style
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of enamoured familiarity which appears in the hymns, the ejaculatory addresses, and often in the sermons of dissenting congregations. Allowing Calvin's idea of the Deity to be just, and believing ourselves also (as his modern disciples often do) of the number of the elect, those fond and passionate epithets, which are borrowed from the amorous softness of sensual attachment, must be inapplicable to the un pitying and remorseless power, who, solely from his own determination, wills the greater part of his creatures to destruction. Our sex has been charged with being peculiarly apt to confound the very opposite characters of their Redeemer, and an earthly lover; and it is said, that the Church of Rome has reconciled many a virgin victim to monastic severities and seclusion, by captivating her imagination with the fallacious title of the Spouse of God. The poetical lati-

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tude of Eastern literature has certainly bestowed this name, among many others, on the Church ; and the metaphor, when taken in this general sense, is as appropriate and beautiful, as it is dangerous and absurd when lowered by individual application. The compositions that I reprobate profess to take the song of Solomon for their model ; which is known to be an Epithalamium addressed by that uxorious monarch to one of his brides. It is preserved in our canon of Scripture as the production of an inspired writer, and on account of its containing several propheticall allusions to the different states of the Jewish and Christian Churches, which (as I have before observed) were often poetically described under the images of a beautiful and spotless, or a faithless and rejected wife, according as they have abounded in graces or been degraded by impiety.—The Church of England received it, as
she

she did all the other Jewish Scriptures; but by passing it over in her rubrics, and offices, we may conclude that she considers it to be of too allegorical and mystical a nature to be safely recommended to the study of her *ordinary* members. That it is particularly unsuitable to the younger part of our sex, who are apt to mingle the idea of lovers and conquests with subjects extremely dissimilar, must be apparent to every sober-minded person. A particular recommendation of this poem to the young and inexperienced, accompanied with an analysis of its contents, in which the misinterpretation that I have just objected to is adopted, and the Redeemer is described as making love to the soul in the character of its bridegroom, is surely a disgrace to the party that has admitted into an annual pocket-book, calculated to allure the well-meaning by its plausible title, and which must

mislead those readers whom it does not *disgust*.

The Song of Solomon is justly admired by all lovers of exquisite poetry, beautiful allegory, and splendid diction; but the work itself (much less its gross and almost blasphemous imitations) does not seem calculated to enlighten the ignorant mind, or to amend the depraved heart. So much previous information respecting the design of the composition, so much knowledge of oriental customs, such clear judgement, and, ought we not to add, such a chaste and correct imagination, are necessary for understanding it rightly, that the song of songs appears best suited to be the *cabinet* companion of a Horsley, a Bryant, or a Jones. Allegories addressed to the passions have done infinite harm in unskilful hands: I will not absolutely say that they have occasioned gross vices; but they have bewildered the weak
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understandings of many, who, under the tuition of sober pastors, might have become sincere humble Christians and valuable members of society.

The ideas which are generally promulgated respecting innocence, guilt, and holiness, by this species of dissenters, are very opposite to the tenor of Scripture exhortation, and argue great ignorance of the human character, and the ordinary affairs of life. Most unquestionably, in the eyes of an infinitely holy and pure God, we must all, even the best of us, be considered as offenders; yet comparatively, and with reference to one another, the distinction of virtuous and vicious behaviour becomes suitable. No notion can be more prejudicial to the cause of religion, than that we must be called from a state of indifference or depravity, by the terrors of an alarmed conscience, to a supposed assurance of holiness and salvation.

tion. The Gentile world was indeed “called from darkness into light;” and the Apostles, with great propriety, enlarge upon the amazing change which the pure precepts and rational doctrines of Christianity made in the lives and sentiments of those, who had been taught to propitiate brutish deities by most infamous actions. But this contrast between past and present morals can rarely take place among the members of a Christian Church, who have been educated in the knowledge of the true God, without scandal to the faith that we profess. Every exhortation to early piety contained in Scripture, every instruction which is bestowed on youth, even our dedication of infants to God by the initiatory sacrament of baptism, implies our being in a state of grace, and proves innocence more acceptable to the Almighty than repentance. Our Lord, indeed, is said to have preached the doctrine
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of forgiveness of sins ; but it must be remembered, that the Almighty's disposition to be reconciled to sinners was till then unknown. Natural religion never discovered this truth*. The law *promised* it, as far as respects the temporal remission of national punishments ; but only *typically* shadowed out the hope of eternal mercy to individual offenders, under the promise of a future prophet, whom the Jews were commanded to hear, and the annual commemoration of an anticipated expiatory sacrifice. Well, therefore, might he, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, rejoice the hearts of his hearers by his beautiful parables of the lost sheep, and the returning prodigal ; but the stray charge is not described as being *dearer* to the heavenly shepherd, than the ninety and nine who had not wandered from the fold ; nor was the

* Hey's Lectures, vol. 1st, p. 326.

weeping spendthrift *preferred* to his industrious obedient brother, who, though tinctured with jealousy and envy, is yet pronounced *heir to all his father's wealth*. Indeed, as our divines justly observe, one of the proofs that Jesus was more than man consists in his perfect developement of human nature, which could only arise from his knowing the secrets of all hearts. Except the blessed author of our religion, Scripture delineates no perfect portrait. The Saint and the Sinner are intermixed, and alternately prevail, in every character that is minutely detailed. In the same chapter our Lord addresses the fervent, irresolute, yet sincere Peter, with
 “Blessed art thou Simon Barjona;” and,
 “Get thee behind me Satan, for thou
 “favourest not the things that be of
 “God.” Our own hearts can testify, that this is the case with us all. At times we seem to rise above the corruption of
 our

our nature ; at other times, to sink beneath its acknowledged imbecility.

We shall not, therefore, make any progress in real edification, by endeavouring to ascertain our assurance of having received saving grace, or to state the time when we felt a call* to newness of life. I hope that I am addressing readers who have never been ignorant that they were accountable beings, and commanded to “work out their own salvation with “fear and trembling.” I trust they have ever avoided gross enormities ; and I fear that they have found, and ever will find it difficult to reach that standard of per-

* The word called, or converted, is indeed always used by the Apostles ; but Scripture offers no instance of a person born of Christian parents, and regularly educated in Christian knowledge. The case of Timothy comes nearest ; and the children of the elect Lady (see the 2d epistle of John) were probably educated in Christianity.

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fection to which they know it is their bounden duty to aspire. If their minds are properly fortified by sound principles, founded on that clearness of idea, and humility of inquiry, which becomes our finite but improveable faculties, they will start at the presumption of attributing an instantaneous conversion to the florid declamation or theatrical gestures of a popular orator, while the written word of God has failed to effect it, and which did not result from an humble and steady use of those means of grace that are of divine appointment; I mean prayer, and the holy eucharist. Should the preacher whom we attend attempt to illustrate his proselyting labours by telling his auditory, that from a grievous sinner he was metamorphosed into an eminent instrument of God's glory to convert others from *carnal formality* to *vital religion*, I trust we shall rather feel disgusted at the egotism of self-praise,

praise, and the effrontery of avowed wickedness, than induced to believe that we are listening to a repentant Peter, or a miraculously converted Paul. Contrition weeps over its crimes, and confesses them to God in secret ; but true contrition will never glory in its shame, by such a public contrast of its past and present life as adds to the number of its offences the sins of vanity and presumption ; vanity in boasting of its present state, and presumption in publishing the transgressions which unfitted it for the office that it has assumed*.

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* We are forbidden to say our prayers standing in the public corners of the streets ; surely then we are restrained from publishing our former sins, as a contrast to our present purity, *especially in the sanctuary*. The Mosaical law required personal symmetry and decorum of manners from its officials ; the religion of Christ alters these qualifications, to the utmost possible purity of life and morals. See 1st Timothy, 3d chapter, Titus 1st chapter. Our Church requires
testimonials

You will not, my dear Miss M——, infer from these observations, that I wish to discourage you from a sincere and frequent examination of your growth in grace. To commune with our own hearts, is not only an important but an indispensable duty ; but it must not be performed under the guidance of enthusiasm. We are not to examine ourselves in order to determine whether we belong to the class of saints or sinners ; the mixed nature of man only allows us to use these terms in a qualified sense ; and if we read our own hearts aright, we shall discover many things partaking of both those characters. If, by being born again, we are to understand

testimonials of sobriety and regularity from every candidate for holy orders ; a pious, or at least an inoffensive previous conduct seems indispensable to all who would become teachers of the gospel.—What shall we say, then, of those *self-convicted reprobates*, who prove their present light by their former darkness ?

perfect

perfect holiness in thought, word, and deed, the church *triumphant* can receive no addition in number from her *militant* associate. It is certain from Scripture, that the same person does in the course of life many times offend and be forgiven, and is alternately at peace or at enmity with God. “ If the sinner departs from “ his evil ways, his offences shall be re- “ membered no more ;” again, “ if the “ upright man forsakes his integrity and “ does evil, in the sin which he com- “ mitted he shall die.” When Scripture uses this plain language, to what purpose is it to perplex ourselves by an inquisitive scrutiny, whether we have ever felt the *assurance of salvation*, or, in the words of the evangelizers, been *born again*? If we feel in our hearts a lively faith, and a sincere purpose of obedience to the divine laws ; if in our conversation and actions we seek to promote ‘ God’s glory,

glory, and the good of our fellow-creatures ; if, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we endeavour to go on from grace to grace, submitting ourselves and all our concerns to the divine will, may we not hope (I say), when we find our minds so disposed, that we are in “ that “ state of salvation” to which, in the language of our church, we *were called by baptism* ? But since, owing to the infirmity of human nature, we can rarely continue stationary in our Christian duties, self-examination becomes necessary, to discover whether we are progressive or retrograde in faith and virtue. If we perceive an improvement in our habits of piety and goodness, let us rejoice with that humility which becomes those who cannot be confident that “ they stand, without being in “ danger of falling.” If we discover that our constitutional bad habits have gained ground upon us, or that some new sin
assails

affails us with powerful and successful temptation, let our repentance be as sincere and profound towards God, as it is unobvious and unobtrusive to man.— Long indulged habits are apt to return ; the strongest motive by which we endeavour to deter youth from transgressing God's laws is, the extreme difficulty of weaning the mind from sinful courses ; self-examination will discover to us our natural propensities, and teach us to place guards where they are most required.

I have ever thought, that the disputes subsisting between the steady members of the Church of England, and moderate Calvinists, on the subject of regeneration, have proceeded more from the want of clear ideas and definite language, than from any material difference of opinion on the subject. Both hold salvation to be the free gift of God by Jesus Christ ; and both, I trust, acknowledge that good works

works are required to be the fruit of Christian faith; by which, though we cannot in strictness be said to *merit* salvation, we discharge our part of the christian covenant, and become capable of it. Our adversaries certainly misrepresent the Church of England, when they describe her as distinguishing between baptism and regeneration; the very answer in the catechism to which they appeal confutes them; as it makes the sacrament of baptism (like that of the Lord's supper) to consist of two parts; of which "water is
 " the outward sign;" and "a death unto
 " sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, the inward and spiritual grace."—
 To say that we look only to the external sprinkling, is to charge us both falsely and foolishly; but we say that we cannot judge of the heart, and therefore the Church supposes all on whom this outward sign is impressed to be called to a state of
 salvation,

salvation, regenerated, received as the adopted children of God, incorporated into the holy church, dead to sin, living unto righteousness, and partakers of the death of Christ*. Of another determinate positive new birth, subsequent to baptism, we know nothing†; though every time that we turn from sin, to serve the living God, we may be said to rise to newness of life, but not, as I before observed, to unfinning holiness.

I have never been able clearly to understand what Methodists, or moderate Calvinists (for I consider these terms as nearly synonymous), mean by regeneration. They seem to intimate, that a sensible change takes place at some period of a person's life, almost similar to what heathen converts formerly experienced; and, if I am rightly informed, a young

* See the Thanksgiving after Baptism.

† See Bishop Taylor's Life of Christ, page 314.
person

person is required to give proof that this change has passed in his mind, before he is admitted to break bread. A description of this perceptible call, and of the manner of God's dealing with his soul, is to be repeated to the elders of the congregation, who are to judge, by the answers given to their inquiries, whether the candidate for full communion has experienced a *conversion*. This, in my opinion, is opening the door to loquacious presumption and hypocrisy, and shutting it against diffidence, which is more likely to prove the casket in which genuine piety is inshrined. But to proceed: After this regenerating operation has once taken place in the mind, the sanctified convert appears, in their opinion, to be placed in a much greater state of security than he was before; contrary to the tenor of experience, and the words of Scripture, which alike warn us to
beware

beware of thinking that we stand. You will perceive, my dear Miss M——, that no rule is, or indeed can be, laid down, to shew us when and how this work should be performed ; and I am persuaded, that persons who hold these notions must find their opinions as to their being *effectually regenerated* vary with their different dispositions of mind, and even the state of their nerves ; being sometimes disposed to think themselves the “ children of wrath,” and at others “ born from above ;” I mean that if spiritual pride have not entirely vanquished humility, the backslidings of a regenerated Methodist must wear, in his own eyes, a most formidable aspect*.

* Whoever wishes for a specimen of the arguments of our opponents on this head, may consult two sermons on Original Sin, and the New Birth, printed by J. Paramore, at the Foundry, Moorfields, 1782, and which are said on the title page not to be sold, but given away.

Far

Far more consolatory, and scriptural, is the avowed opinion of our Church, which holds, that though we are all made in baptism “ the children of God, members “ of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven,” we may *forfeit* these privileges by sin, and *recover* them by repentance. Far more charitable and just is the judgement by which she determines on the conduct of her members, whom, if she sees them regular in their religious and moral duties, she supposes to be in a state of grace, and does not terrify nor offend them by an inquisitorial examination as to what peculiar fancies and opinions they may privately indulge, provided these do not affect their outward conduct. To notorious ill-livers she denies the eucharistical feast as long as they continue in their sins. An externally sober, honest, and religious person, has no right to be thrust from the Lord’s table by a fellow-creature,

creature, who does not possess the gift of omniscience. Such a one *may* be a hypocrite; and a strong persuasion that he has been regenerated, will not preserve him from the *crime of dissimulation*. To the Searcher of hearts we must leave that offence which walks unseen on earth, and can alike assume the lawn of episcopacy, or the stiff garb of Puritanical singularity.

The last remark which I mean to make on that pretended desire of edification which leads many to desert their church, or at least, while they abide within its pale, to exhibit a compound of hostility and conformity, shall relate to that objection of “moral preaching,” which is often brought against the sermons of our regular divines. We might properly enough reply, that as the temptations to offend God are more apt to spring up in the way of our practice, than in that of our faith, our spiritual guides are right in

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fixing their strongest guards in those places where their flock may be most easily assailed. The liturgy of the church is doctrinal, as well as supplicative ; so are her articles ; and the manual in which they are contained is in the possession of nearly all her members. She has provided especial offices for the education of her youth ; and if parents and sponsors did their duty, our knowledge of the mysteries of religion could not depend on the *discretionary* instructions of our pastors. We might further observe, that knowledge, once acquired, is not in danger of being soon lost ; but that the deceitfulness of sin so disguises darling vices and fashionable indulgencies, that we need more impartial observation than our own to rescue our inflamed passions from the fatal fascination of habit, authority, or importunity. Nor are we on this point compelled to stand merely on the defensive ;
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did not a fear of widening the breach that is between us enjoin a degree of caution which almost exceeds the prescribed bounds of moderation, we might ask those who urge this charge against it, if they think that depreciating a life of comparative innocence is the best method of recommending our religion to infidels. The 10th chapter of the Acts teaches us, that though morality is not sufficient to salvation, it is the likeliest means of disposing the mind for the reception of Christian graces. We have an apostolical command to add to our faith *virtue*; and the inquisition at the great audit will proceed upon the principle, that righteousness is acceptable to God. “Well done, good and faithful servant;” and “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity;” are words addressed to free and moral agents, who come to receive the reward of *good deeds*, or the punishment of *evil actions*.

It is, however, by no means true, that the preachers of our national church are, generally speaking, mere moral essayists. Some few spruce chaplains may indeed, like Pope's soft Dean, avoid "naming hell to ears polite;" as some few among the more ignorant of our opponents preach open Antinomianism; but in a very numerous majority of our churches, *virtue* is always recommended on Christian motives, and enforced by Christian hopes. A sermon is a popular and brief address to a mixed auditory, who are supposed to be previously instructed in the elementary knowledge of their religion. On particular festivals, the mystery then especially commemorated is judiciously selected as the prevailing topic, either by commenting on the scripture narrative, shewing its connexion with preceding prophecies, and refuting the cavils of sceptics; or, by drawing such practical inferences from

from the dispensations of Almighty God, as may induce us to add to our faith that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Those who reproach us as mixing persuasives to moral purity with the doctrines of the gospel, surely forget that the most perfect ethical composition was spoken by our Blessed Lord to the multitude who stood around the Sinai of the Gospel, and heard our high Priest extend the precepts of the Decalogue to universal holiness and purity of heart. He condemned particular vices; he pronounced the beatitude of particular virtues; and shall they who labour in the fold that he has set up in this kingdom, be blamed for following his example? By a most lively allusion to an ill-erected building, he illustrated the important truth, that *profitable* attendance on the word of God consists, not merely in hearing, but in doing his will; and if they

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built but upon a sandy foundation, who only *listened* to the Son of God, what term shall we find appropriate to the baseless fabrics of those who neglect their useful vocations, and suppose that religion consists in collecting a crude undigested mass of confused ideas, perplexing their minds with vain inquiries and minute distinctions, preferring the fastidiousness of the critic to the docility of the pupil, and complaining of *unwholesome* doctrine, because their lawful teachers strive to improve their *stubborn hearts*, and to *correct* their *vicious lives*, instead of gratifying their itching ears, or soothing their fantastic imaginations?

Were we to follow the brainfick inconsistency of enthusiasm in all its deplorable changes, we might lament that the hungry wanderers from our episcopal church are often fed with the meagre ebullitions of strained metaphor, forced conceit, colloquial

quial impertinence, and irreverent, or, I might say, frequently blasphemous applications of scriptural language or events to familiar occurrences; such as the supposed conversion of the gifted mechanic who harangues them, or the providences and experiences that have befallen a recent convert. It is particularly observable, that this species of seceders from the establishment avoid enforcing the duties depending to the fifth commandment. The reason is evident; for, were they to be explained as they are in that admirable comment upon them which is contained in the church catechism*, they would bear so hard upon the dissent of these self-appointed teachers, as would convince their

* “ To love, honour, and succour my father and
 “ mother; to honour and obey the king and all that
 “ are put in authority under him; to submit myself
 “ to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors
 “ and masters; to order myself lowly and reverently
 “ to all my betters.”

followers that they greatly *sinned* by that schismatical pertinacity to their true spiritual pastors, which they are now taught to consider as their duty. To preach the same doctrine with those from whom we wish to gain hearers, is but to open a new seminary upon an old plan. Novelty of *manner* is not sufficient; there must be novelty of *matter* too. The reason which illiterate people generally give for deserting their regular minister, is, that he does not teach them how they are to be saved. Ask them, if he has never said, that by God's mercy, through Jesus Christ, and through faith in his merits, their sincere though fallible obedience to his laws will be rewarded with life everlasting? and they generally answer by a hesitating yes; and then add, that they want to know more. What! more than our liturgy teaches? Yes. More than the Holy Scriptures, which our Church exhorts all her members to

to read diligently, reveals? I am grieved to say, that I was once, by implication, answered yes; and that too by a person who has since officiated as a lay teacher. What poisonous herbage must that flock devour, whose shepherd fancies that man can relate more than God has told him. This *more*, when ingenuously discovered, proves to be the dangerous doctrine*, that a sinner's acceptance with God does not rest or depend on the conformity of his will to the divine law; but that, as Christ has done all for us, and as his righteousness is imputed to us, we have nothing to do *but to lay hold on him*. It must be apparent to you, my dear Miss M——, that rigid Calvinism is so totally adverse to human responsibility, that it will be difficult to discover any motive which a teacher, who professes those opi-

* That this doctrine is eminently dangerous, see Matthew, 7th chapter, verses 21st, 22d, and 23d.

nions, can consistently use to dissuade his auditors from the most atrocious crimes; and even the more moderate adherents to the apostle of Geneva, who hold man to be merely passive in the work of salvation, certainly deprive themselves of the strongest arguments that can be urged on the side of virtue, namely, the promise of its future reward; which term, though actually used by our Saviour, they frequently cavil at in the discourses of our clergy. We may generally observe, that no style of preaching can promote Christian edification, which diminishes the sense of human responsibility, and makes either our Maker or our nature answerable for our actual offences. I believe we have examined with sufficient minuteness that pretended love of edification, which draws many weak people from the church in which they received baptism, and from whose pale it is *criminal* for them to depart
on

on light and frivolous pretences. We have seen how little reason they have to expect such advantages, either from the matter or the manner of their new instructors; but, on the other hand, how much danger there is, that the light within them will be quenched by a superabundance of words without knowledge, and opinions without argument. It is most earnestly to be wished, for their own sakes, as well as for the peace of our Jerusalem, that these, perhaps well-meaning, but certainly blamable wanderers, would be content to see what is plainly their duty, and to avoid such curious mysteries as human intellect can never clearly explore.

Sometimes, dissatisfaction proceeds no further than censure and complaint against our ordinances and officials, and does not amount to that breach of communion which constitutes the offence of schism. I would earnestly exhort persons thus
 R. 6 circumstanced,

circumstanced, in the words of a very
 learned and amiable divine, "You are
 " haunted with scruples and misgivings;
 " pursue your own course, and see what
 " will be the result. You are discon-
 " tented with something in your own
 " church; look out for another: sup-
 " posing you found one perfectly to your
 " mind; yet even then you ought not
 " to join it, except the change will com-
 " pensate for the mischiefs of schism, and
 " for any accidental inconveniencies, such
 " as increase of distance, &c. But the
 " supposition of a church perfectly un-
 " exceptionable is not to be admitted;
 " such perfection is so improbable, that,
 " guiding ourselves by experience, we
 " must expect that if you find any num-
 " ber of errors or faults in your own
 " church, you will find some in other
 " churches; perhaps as many as in your
 " own, or more: you cannot then be
 " consistent in that case, except you quit
 " them

“ them all : the question then would be,
 “ whether you ~~may~~ quit all religious so-
 “ cieties, and worship God in solitude?
 “ We answer, every thing in the nature
 “ of the thing, every thing in the ex-
 “ pressions of Scripture, is against such
 “ a measure. If you are alone, you
 “ must lose most of the benefits of reli-
 “ gion ; instruction and sympathy wholly,
 “ and association in a great degree ; even
 “ reading and meditation grow either
 “ dead or extravagant. And the pretence
 “ is trifling ; nor are you at liberty to act
 “ upon it, except you also determine to
 “ retire from civil society, and to fix
 “ yourself in some desert or uninhabited
 “ island, because in monarchies you have
 “ found some oppression, in democracies
 “ some turbulence, and in every form of
 “ civil government something inconsist-
 “ ent with your ideas of perfection *.”

• Hey’s Lectures, vol. 2d, pages 119, 120.

I have

I have been thus copious on what I feel to be a very painful subject, on account of the rapid progress which ecclesiastical insubordination is making, especially among the humbler walks of life. I have not used the name of evangelical, assumed by our opponents, out of reproach; nor yet by any means as acquiescing in the arrogant pretension, that they have a superior right to the title, or that the light of the gospel is no where diffused in this island, but where they have raised the standard of separation from the church, or surreptitiously attempted to pass for her only genuine offspring. Less danger results to our establishment from open foes, than from those who excite disputations under the pretext of zealous duty. I call upon these, in the name of God, to say why, if they really teach the same doctrine as their clerical brethren, they affect to consider themselves as a distinct body??

body? Why do they treat their fellow-labourers with contempt and obloquy? Why do they lay claim to superior knowledge, illumination, and purity, and prevent the advantages which would result from mutually labouring to promote the interests of unity and holiness? Discord is not only the natural impediment, but the *predicted binderance* to the progress of the gospel of peace. Are they disputing about words only? Can vague expressions, or a peculiar style in the preacher, be a justifiable cause of contention? Or can nice points and subtilties, which few can comprehend, and all must use much circumspection and precision to state with accuracy, be a defence for schism? Can such pretences justify them at the day of judgment for all the mischiefs which angry disputations occasion? If worldly motives influence their conduct; if they clamour for fame, eminence, or valuable preferment,

preferment, they must resign all pretensions to singleness of heart. If they really imagine, that the interests of true Christianity can be promoted by inflaming the imaginations, perplexing the understandings, and unfixing the principles of their ignorant auditors, by their continually expatiating on obscure and disorganizing topics, we may pity the confusion of their minds, and give those allowances to their sincerity which we detract from their sanity.

I may possibly alarm the well-intentioned part of such seceders, by transcribing the opinion of the learned translator of Mosheim. Speaking of the dangers to be apprehended to the Protestant religion, he observes—"If Popery
 " should any way be re-introduced, it
 " must be through the means of fanatism;
 " cism; which by discrediting free inquiry,
 " decrying human learning, and
 " encou-

“ encouraging those pretended illumina-
 “ tions and impulses which give the ima-
 “ gination an *undue* ascendant in religion,
 “ lays weak minds open to the seductions
 “ of a church which has always made its
 “ conquests by wild visions and false
 “ miracles. Cry down reason, preach
 “ up implicit faith, make inward experi-
 “ ence the test of truth, extinguish free
 “ inquiry, and the main barriers to
 “ Popery will be removed.”

Supported by such authority, I will
 venture to give my opinion, that itine-
 rant Calvinists * little suspect how far
 they are advanced toward the most odious
 doctrines of Popery. But, indeed, those
 who set off with a violent resolution to
 get as far as possible from what they
 hate, are ever doomed to run in a circle,
 and thus finally meet what they determine

* By this phrase is meant all who leave their regu-
 lar teachers.

to avoid. For, not to draw the obvious parallel between the lying wonders of the Romish church, and the extraordinary interpositions of Heaven which they style providences and experiences, is not their passion for gifted preachers, that is, for enthusiastical coxcombs destitute of learning, exactly similar to the Romish doctrine, which holds the power of the priest to be not only *declaratory* and *ministerial*, but *essential* and *conclusive*? a tenet that our church solemnly abjures*. How shall we else account for the inconveniencies to which these eager hearers expose themselves, by deserting the more regular minister of their own persuasions, to follow him who has had the *latest call*? It is certain, that among these people popularity is never lasting, and the benefit of holy worship always seems to depend upon

* Article 26th.

those who administer it. The merit also which they seem to attach to the long journeys and severe privations that they undergo to hear a fine new man, favours greatly of the supposed benefits that were formerly ascribed to penances and pilgrimages. Do these professed haters of antichrist and lovers of liberty know, that their favourite doctrine, that no one should submit to the civil institutions of any state unless he had first given his consent to them, was invented by the agents of the papacy to raise the power of the Pontiff over secular princes, and was found eminently serviceable to the clergy of that hierarchy, who, having an unbounded sway over the consciences of the people, by making popular authority paramount to regal dominion, cunningly established their own supremacy*?

* The custom among Dissenters and Methodists, of teachers changing congregations with each other, is more political than pious, and turns religion into an entertainment.

“ Heresies.”

“Heresies,” as the venerable Bishop Horne observes, “however defeated, “however triumphantly answered, are “only conquered for a time. They seem “to make their periodical revolutions in “the church, like comets in the heavens, now disappearing, and now appearing again in their erratic course.” Can this be wondered at? It is the spirit of the mystery of iniquity, which always speaks; and when the old embroidered suit of popery is worn thread-bare, it will dispute in the quaint garb of puritanism.

Theological controversy, considered in its best light, I mean as keeping alive a zeal for religion, is even then a most humiliating proof of human imperfection, and shews that we are still at an immense distance from possessing that peace which Christ bequeathed to us. “The wolf “cannot dwell with the lamb, nor the “leopard

“leopard with the kid; the lion will not
 “eat straw with the ox, nor the sucking
 “child play with the asp;” while the
 trumpet of discord sounds “in the holy
 “mountains;” nor “shall the know-
 “ledge of the Lord cover the earth as
 “the waters cover the sea,” till missions
 are no longer founded in schism, nor
 children taught that a diversity of opinions
 in religion is acceptable and pleasing to
 God. Contention is always a punish-
 ment, unanimity a blessing; and never
 was discord among sincere Christians more
 to be dreaded than in these times, when
 irreligion and licentiousness wear such a
 formidable aspect. Let us hope, then,
 that the truly devout, aware of the evils
 of affected singularity, and controversies
 on points which both parties confess are
 not *essential to salvation*, will avoid the sin
 of causeless separation, by cheerfully sa-
 crificing their private scruples to the
 great

great blessing of public uniformity.—

“ And may the God of Peace so compose

“ our minds, that if our brains differ,

“ our hearts and tongues may agree.”—

At least, may all who profess to have the same God, Lord, faith, and baptism, in their individual capacities, shew forth that meek and holy charity “ which seeketh
“ not her own, is not easily provoked,
“ thinketh no evil, and vaunteth not it-
“ self.” The wounds of our Sion would then be speedily healed.

Before I close this letter, I will remark, that in this dissipated and licentious age, the charge of methodism is often unwarrantably urged against many valuable and steady members of our church, merely on account of the extraordinary piety and seriousness of their behaviour. Pretensions to superior sanctity are always dangerous, as they provoke a scrutiny which human rectitude can rarely sustain. God forbid, however,
that

that because there have been devotees and hypocrites, we should therefore deny the existence of genuine devotion. It is much to be wished, that persons who have a regard to religion would never deviate into moroseness of manner, nor, by a total seclusion of themselves from the world, neglect the precept of letting their light shine before men. Might we not hope, that if the truly good would oftener mix in the public haunts of men, their presence and union might awe the effrontery of the licentious, and correct the frivolity of the dissipated? Might they not (for I do not consider this body to be inconsiderable either in rank or number) introduce such a change into public amusements, and general customs, as would produce the happiest effects on public morals? The undertaking, I grant, would be arduous; it would require great exertion of fortitude, perfect command of

of temper, and, above all, such an assumption of consequence, and avowal of merit, as is most repugnant to the modest feelings of real desert. Virtue, then, must generally reside in the shade: it is the region in which she best flourishes. Yet, conscious of her own fallibility, let her examine herself there, and be cautious of acquiring peculiarities that will lessen her influence. On the other hand, let us make allowances for natural temper, for the pressure of severe calamity, for disappointments, or, possibly, for the lively feelings of remorse, in a really contrite and renovated heart; nor let us stamp with the opprobrious stigma of schismatic a devout Anna, who spends her time in the temple; an attentive Mary, who listens to the voice of her Lord; a repentant Magdalen, who bathes the feet of Jesus with tears; or a charitable Dorcas, who makes garments for the naked.—

The

The Church to which we belong interdicts no degrees of virtue or piety. Seriousness is not separation ; strictness is not non-conformity. . If a few of her community seem to pay too little attention to things of this world, the majority of her professors are too indifferent to that which is to come. That the divine Power, who enables us “ both to will and to do ” what is good, may ever preserve you in the happy medium, prays your sincerely affectionate, &c.

LETTER VII.

On the Tenets of Rational Christians, & Unitarians.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

SINCE you permit me to pursue the course adopted in a former publication of a similar nature to my present attempt, I shall now call your attention to a set of

* Here, as in the case of the opponents whom we have just dismissed, we may complain of the unfairness of the distinguishing terms that are adopted by our adversaries. The Calvinists have no more claim to the term evangelical, than churchmen; and we are as rational and as true believers in one God, as the Unitarians: these denominations are assumed for sinister and political purposes. The uninformed always feel a great charm in words.

Dissenters

Dissenters, who err in the contrary extreme from what we last considered. For, as those generally decry the guidance of reason, and the advantages of human learning, these latter maintain the supremacy of our limited faculties, and are too apt to discard every tenet of revelation that cannot be lowered to the *grasp* of our scanty intellect, or which can in any way be supposed to contradict the discoveries of science. While the Calvinists tell us, that Christ has done all for us, and that we are mere machines, unresisting receptacles of the overwhelming grace of God; the Socinians reject the atonement and mediatorial office of the Redeemer, depose him from his exalted rank of Son of God, and lower him to a created being, nay even to a mortal man liable to sin. Proud of the dignity of their nature, they assert our free agency, at the expence of divine supremacy; and they make our

salvation to depend so entirely on ourselves, as to limit, if not annihilate, the co-operating assistance of the Spirit of God. You will perceive, that these opinions are rather addressed to the pride of philosophy, than to the passions of the multitude; they are, however, disseminated with great zeal amongst all ranks of society; and they are combined with such pretensions to free inquiry, the right of private judgement, and absolute impunity in matters of opinion, as are most likely to ensure their popularity. Much mental strength is enrolled in the ranks of these disputants; and a periodical work, esteemed by many to be unique in wit and vigour, is the avowed champion of this cause, and the vigilant and merciless castigator of its adversaries. It is believed, that *a most decided majority* of the people of England refuse to be laughed, or reasoned, out of what they have long considered to be the
peculiarly

peculiarly distinguishing tenets of their religion. I cannot help suspecting, however, that the amazing pains which were taken a few years ago to instill into the unsuspecting mind of youth a firm persuasion, that modes of faith are unessential, and settled religious principles another name for bigotry, have not been without effect, though they may not have added to the numbers of the sect by whom this laxity of faith was peculiarly recommended. Whence is it, that this age is so fertile in new and strange opinions? How comes it, that the austere but sincere piety of former periods should lapse into lukewarm acquiescence with established forms, of the meaning of which we rather glory than blush to be ignorant; or else evaporate into the frothy effusions of whimsical enthusiasm? It is certain, that the latitudinarian and the fanatic mutually prepare proselytes for each other. . . . When

once the mind is loosened from the steady anchor of fixed principles, it is ready to drive with every wind of doctrine, and never knows the comfort of secure repose*. The repeated admonitions that have

* There cannot be a fairer specimen of the style of criticism which is employed to shake the foundations of religious principle, than the following remarks on the maternal instructions which a lady of fashion addressed to her son, the respectable author of which had had the hardihood to exchange vague and indefinite admonitions, for an express recommendation of the national faith. “ With respect to the *doctrines* “ of *Christianity*, without combating the positions “ here laid down, we confess we should have been “ better pleased, if the *orthodox* faith of the fair “ writer had been offered to her pupil in a more “ modest and less decided tone. When an author’s “ tenets are founded solely on the authority of the “ English translation of the New Testament, which “ may chance to convey more or less than the ori- “ ginal fairly implies, a certain degree of diffidence “ should surely accompany assertions, especially on “ points

have been given to parents, to avoid making their children bigots, by teaching

“ points which are yet contested among the learned
 “ divines of the reformed churches. A single text
 “ may be good *verbal proof*, and such as may prove
 “ satisfactory to *fair divines*; but there are others
 “ who would hesitate to establish their faith on such
 “ slender grounds, and they would recollect the re-
 “ mark of the poet: In religion

“ What damned error, but some sober brow

“ Will bless it, and approve it with a text.

“ SHAKESPEARE.”

Might not one ask the author of this ingenious mode of combating *fair divines*, on what *single-text* has our church founded any of its doctrines? Is it impossible for a mere English reader to obtain such a view of the controversy, as to discover which party brings the strongest scriptural evidence, or most ably supports its opinion? I presume, the conductors of this review only mean to prohibit *orthodox* females from using a decided tone; for I recollect that the daring assertions of an audacious advocate of impiety and revolt received no harsh reproof; but the public were invited to read *her* writings, by calling them spirited and original.

them mysteries before their reason ripened, has caused young people to be trained up in such ignorance of the faith which they profess, as would have astonished every age since the Reformation. To this, I am persuaded, we must ascribe the recent progress of Calvinism; and not, as it is invidiously stated, to the *neglect* of our regular clergy. Elementary instruction is a branch of *parental* duty; it is the foundation on which the superstructure of Christian knowledge must be raised; and we might as well cavil with Eton and Westminster for not teaching the primer, as condemn our spiritual pastor for not publicly teaching "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ."— If, under the idea of being an enlightened and liberal parent, we suffer our children to remain in ignorance of the terms and obligations of their baptismal vow; if we tell them, that they are free to choose the

way

way in which they will worship the universal God; who is alike pleased with the homage of "the Saint, the Savage, and "the Sage," let us not seek for the reason of their future maladies in the unwholesome nutriment that they receive from their parochial minister, but in our having neglected to feed their infant years with the milk of God's holy word, lest we should thereby prejudice them in favour of what the wisest of mankind have pronounced to be ten thousand times more precious than the riches of Ophir.

There is something so formidable in the term *bigot*, especially when coupled with its ally *persecutor*, that I do not wonder our latitudinarian sectaries have found these names most useful artillery to drive weak mothers from performing their duty, and to intimidate diffident people from avowing the principles that they professed. What if I shew, that these alarm-

ing epithets are not appropriate, when ascribed to the conscientious members of a church constituted upon such principles as that to which we belong! But I must appeal from the judgement of those who do not acknowledge the divine authority of our whole Scriptures, and only use a mutilated and garbled edition of such parts of the sacred writings as suit their own purposes. I might advert to the epistles of St. Paul, who authoritatively denounces various heresies, and excommunicates heretics in the churches which he founded, and governed, either by himself or his immediate agents. I might bring forward the examples of St. Peter and St. Jude, who exhorted their converts to “beware of those who privily bring in damnable heresies, even *denying the Lord who bought them* ;” and “to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,” because certain

men

men " have crept in unawares, who
 " were before of old ordained to this con-
 " demnation; ungodly men, turning the
 " grace of God into lasciviousness, and
 " denying the only Lord God and our
 " Lord Jesus Christ;" but I will rest my
 proof on the doctrines of the beloved
 disciple St. John. As he was most ho-
 noured with the friendship of his master,
 we have reason to believe that his cha-
 racter was most assimilated to that perfect
 model of all excellence which the incar-
 nate Deity presented. In his writings we
 trace two distinguishing features; a sub-
 lime and clear view of the sacred myste-
 ries, and an ardent affection for his fellow-
 creatures. His Gospel opens with a full
 and unequivocal testimony of the divinity
 of his Master; a text which, according
 to the confession of the learned German
 commentator Michaelis, has never been
 in the least affected by the most diligent
 F 6 inquiry,

inquiry, and minute criticism, of those who would banish that doctrine from the articles of religion. Instead of its authenticity being *shaken* by the collections of two celebrated collators of manuscripts, Mills and Wettstein, it has been *rendered more certain than ever* *. When we consider that the numerous manuscripts of this gospel which are preserved have been made by transcribers differing in sentiments, and for opposite purposes; that they lived in countries and ages remote from each other, and used different languages and idioms; we must look upon the authentic identity of this text as a peculiar interposition of the same holy Spirit, which first inspired the venerable apostle to pen this important truth, to refute the fallacies of heretics who, even in the first ages of the church, refused to

* The same is observed of Romans, 9th chapter, and 5th verse.

bow the pride of human reason to those attesting miracles which witnessed the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God. It is generally acknowledged, that the gospel of St. John was written at a time when heresies had crept into the Church*; and every attentive reader of this sacred treatise must acknowledge, that it is diametrically opposite to the notion of the mere humanity of our Lord. It seems singular, that the Socinians should venture to assert, that their opinions were what was antiently esteemed to be orthodox, in the very teeth of an apostolical history, composed for the especial purpose of asserting the doctrine which is maintained by every Christian community but their own.

I fear that I have been led to digress a little from my purpose. It was rather my

* The first deniers of Christ's divinity were the Gnostics.

design

design to propose to you the *example* of St. John, than at this time to enlarge upon his *doctrine*. The proofs of those fundamental articles of our faith (the divinity and atonement of Christ) are more numerous in the writings of this apostle, than in any other of the sacred penmen; yet none of them appear to have glowed with such ardent, such universal benevolence, as this evangelist. He even makes our love to our brother the pledge and criterion of our boasted love to our Maker. His first or catholic epistle is generally believed to have been written in extreme old age, when he was on the eve of beholding his friend and master in the full fruition of uncreated glory. How pathetic, how energetic are his admonitory adieus to that flock which he had so long attended! He salutes them with the epithet of "beloved;" he calls them "his little children;" he conjures and entreats,

entreats them "to keep steadfast in the faith;"- and he admonishes them "to love one another," as the mark of their religion. Did he, who leaned on the bosom of Christ, believe modes of faith to be *immaterial*, or that the characters of a firm champion of the truth, and a genuine philanthropist, are incompatible? Did I say philanthropy? Let me reject a term so often perverted to the basest purposes, and substitute the Christian epithet of charity. Shall we accuse the beloved disciple of inconsistency or bigotry; and can the master, who selected him from all human beings as most worthy of the glorious title of his friend, be screened from the charge of weak partiality? We will not tax God foolishly, nor lightly impeach the conduct of the most distinguished of mankind. True benevolence extends to the souls as well as to the bodies of our fellow-creatures; and what greater kindness

kindness can be shewn to the former, than in steadily resisting dreadful and seductive doctrines?

From the testimony which the writings of St. John afford of his character in advanced life, we may discover the efficacy of his master's lessons on his naturally vehement and vindictive character. In the warm enthusiasm of early youth, he was anxious to "call down fire from Heaven" on those cities that would not receive his Lord; but the unction of that blessed Spirit, of which he received so copious a share on the day of Pentecost, taught him the *manner* in which he was to enforce his mission. He now knew, that he was not appointed ruler of the Asian Churches to use the arm of the flesh, or to afflict and torment others. But, as no two things can be more opposite, than tacit acquiescence in false opinions, and cruelty to erring brethren, he has left us a shining

shining example of zeal for truth, without that base alloy of uncharitableness, which human passions are so apt to intermix in whatever deeply interests the mind*.

Bigotry

* I am unwilling to mix with the *certain* authority of Scripture, the doubtful attestation of human testimony; yet I wish to repeat two anecdotes of this apostle, authenticated by Irenæus, a father of the second century, who professed that he had them from Polycarp, the immediate disciple of St. John. Whatever may be their authenticity, Irenæus must have thought that they corresponded with the then well-known character of this apostle. The one is, that coming into the bath at Ephesus, and hearing that the noted heretic Cerinthus was then there, he immediately left it, warning his followers to do the same, lest the place which contained so great an enemy to the truth should fall upon their heads.—The other anecdote is, that when age disabled him from preaching at every public meeting, he exhorted his flock with these words:—“ Little children, love one another.” His auditors, wearied with the repetition, inquired the reason of it; and received for

Bigotry and prejudice are as much the bugbears of this age, as the Pope and the Pretender were formerly. It is impossible to defend what is right, without danger of encountering the obloquy annexed to tyranny, persecution, ignorance, fanaticism, and narrowness of soul. Yet it seems as if few were so bigoted as those who loudly declaim in praise of unbounded freedom of opinion; which, when nicely analyzed, is generally found to mean a restless desire of establishing our own sentiments as the universal doctrine. Surely, when we praise the liberality of our own notions, we discover too much vanity to bring the sentiments of our adversaries into discredit with any intelligent reader.

for answer, "This is what our Lord commanded; and if we can do this, we need do nothing else."

I have quoted this account from an excellent work, *once* studied by every family; I mean Nelson's Companion to the Feasts and Fasts of the Church of England. It may be found in various authors.

To

To apply this remark to that species of Dissenters which is most vehement in charging the establishment with bigotry: According to their acknowledged tenets, modes of faith are *immaterial* in the eyes of the Deity. The Romanists, who believe salvation to be circumscribed within the papal pale, are justifiable in their zeal for making converts; but what motive can we assign to those, who teach that "God made men to differ in points of faith," and who yet pursue every method, and move every engine, to bring the world to a conformity with their own opinion? Is not this using one measure for our neighbours, and another for ourselves, and crying out against the intolerance that we practise? Does this proceed from zeal for truth! No; with them, the conscious mind is its own "awful world;" and what seems right to a man is determined to be right to him.

The

The motive must, therefore, be, either the love of contention, or that ambitious desire of superiority, and bigoted attachment to their own notions, which they charge as heinous offences against us; who, dreading the threatenings denounced against those that *mutilate* the sacred volume, dare not erase a truth which pervades the whole series of Scripture, from the brief but awful and instructive narrative of the formation and fall of man, to that prophetic close of the sacred volume which lifts the mysterious veil of futurity, to shew us the final renovation of the human species in the city of the living God.

I need not inform my dear young friend, that the truth to which I have alluded is, the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God; by which the Almighty Father was pleased at once to shew his hatred to sin, and his compassion to sinners. I do not intend to
 pursue

pursue the long series of promises, analogies, ceremonial institutions, and prophecies, by which the world was prepared for this great event : a volume devoted to the subject would give but a brief view of the types and predictions which announced its unexampled importance. To this point all the promises made to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the rest of the Patriarchs, pre-eminently tended ; even those which appear to *us* to be merely of a personal, temporary nature, to *them* (as we may learn from other parts of Scripture) disclosed views which extended beyond this transitory state, and the temporal concerns of their offspring. To prepare mankind, by previous conceptions of the manner in which the offended justice of the Almighty must be propitiated, sacrifices were introduced (and it is believed by divine appointment) immediately after the fall ; they were revived in
 the

the renewed covenant made with Noah after the flood; and *positively* enjoined to the Patriarchs during their various migrations. When the Mosaical law was given by God to the Jews, they were esteemed of such consequence, that the regulation of them forms one entire book of the Pentateuch; and during the whole of the Jewish œconomy, those ceremonials were regularly observed, though often contaminated by idolatrous intermixture.

Considered in itself, slaying a beast in honour of a spiritual being, must appear an absurd and indecorous mode of homage. There is no natural connexion between shedding of blood, and pardon of sin; these purple libations, therefore, must originally have been of superhuman appointment, and intended to prepare the minds of men for that event which was to happen in fulness of time. It is evident, from the numerous reproofs of the prophets,

phets, that the Jews were apt. to look no further than to the mere visible ordinance; the 50th Psalm, and the 1st chapter of Isaiah, are lively instances of an endeavour to *spiritualize* the minds of the people, and to convince them that it was not the blood of calves and of goats that was really acceptable to God.

If it be asked by our opponents, why, God would not grant the pardon that he intended, without requiring so severe a ransom as the precious blood of Christ? we may answer, "it was not his pleasure so to do." To argue on this point from what we should suppose to be *noble* in the conduct of a human creature, is to produce a parallel which fails in all the known points of resemblance. It is to compare finite with infinite, in every point of view in which we can suppose presence, purity, justice, mercy, power, and requital, to act. The king, who should

should offer the *beir* of his throne as a sacrifice for the *crimes* of his subjects, must have the power of raising him from the grave, before he can be produced as a comparison for the Almighty ; and he must be himself *sinless*, before he can consistently thus express his irreconcilableness to *guilt*. From our confessed incapacity of judging of any thing so remote from us as the Deity, acquiescence in what he has revealed becomes not only expedient, but our bounden duty. All that we know of God is from the works of his hands, and the book dictated by his Spirit ; and from both we may learn, that “ he seeth not
 “ as man seeth ; that his ways are equal,
 “ though ours are unequal ; and that his
 “ purposes are past finding out.” At present, “ we see through a glass darkly ;” because our faculties are too limited to give us a just, and adequate idea, either of his attributes, or of the laws of that invi-
sible

sible state in which he is more conspicuously revealed. Is it so extraordinary, that the creature cannot comprehend the Creator? Does such a description of the God whom we Christians worship, prove him to be any ways different from that author of nature, for whose mysterious operations philosophers cannot satisfactorily account in many minute instances, though the general result of the visible creation compels them to confess that he is, and that he is infinitely wise and benevolent? In the moral government of the world, does not Providence frequently permit affliction to fall upon virtue, and suffer vice to prosper even by the means of its own wicked machinations? This correspondence between the character and conduct of the Almighty, as described by his word and his works, opens a very copious field for observation, upon which we will presently touch, though my

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knowledge of natural philosophy and science is too limited to enable me to do it the justice that I wish.

But let us first pursue our observations on the objections that are raised to these two momentous points, the redemption of the world, and the plurality of persons in the Godhead. The opponents with whom we now contend admit Jesus Christ to be a prophet sent from God ; and by their lately ascribing to him the term Lord, I hope they have generally rejected Dr. Priestley's impious notion that he was mere man, and acknowledge him to be a great pre-existent spirit, probably the first of created beings, and the delegated head of the Christian church. As they must, therefore, have got over what was to them so long a stumbling block, the miraculous incarnation, it is much to be lamented that they could not bring their minds to receive the *whole truth* ; for
how

how we can address prayers to or through any *created* being without being guilty of idolatry, or having mean and unworthy ideas of God, they must explain; and if he be our Lord and spiritual head, it is *from* him, as well as *for* his sake; that we must expect blessing and protection. They still deny the atonement, or that the world was reconciled to God by the death of Christ; but they admit that he really was crucified, and rose from the dead in proof and confirmation of the truth of the doctrine that he was sent into the world to teach; namely, the resurrection of the body, and immortal life. They say, it is inconsistent with the ideas that we ought to form of divine justice, to suppose that God would not pardon the guilty, without some innocent person paid the stipulated ransom of their souls, by submitting to temporal death, to rescue the world from eternal punishment. As they make

such a point of explaining all the actions of the Deity on human grounds, they must tell us how they justify God for suffering this innocent person to die, in order to convince a stubborn and incredulous world of the truth of his mission. We may tell *them*, that God could have made use of means more suited to *our* ideas of rectitude, to convince sceptics who had resisted the power of unexampled miracles, with as much applicableness of argument to their notions, as they can urge against our creeds, that a less exceptionable mode of pardoning sinners might have been adopted. If they plead, that the resurrection of Christ removes all idea of injustice from their explanation of this proceeding, we may reply, that that event is equally justificatory of the righteous dealings of God in our system. According to them, the Resurrection of Christ merely told the world that he was a true prophet;

prophet ; we have the words of an apostle on our side when we add, that it was also the joyful confirmation of our own restoration to divine favour. Christ is risen from the dead, and therefore our faith is not vain ; we are no longer in our sins*. The Unitarians generally allow, that Christ intercedes for us in Heaven. Is it not as derogatory to the divine attribute of mercy, as measured by our finite reason, that sinners should need an *advocate* and *remembrancer* to move the Almighty to pardon their failings and relieve their wants, as that their offences should require a *ransom* ? Into these absurdities and contradictions men are apt to fall, who open the sacred volume with a predetermined idea of making it bend to their own notions, not of humbly learning, and piously submitting to what they are there taught.

* 1st Corinthians, 15th chapter, 17th verse.

If the doctrines of the Trinity *, and the atonement, rested upon a few particular passages of Scripture of doubtful interpretation, as is the case with the positive decrees that we lately considered †, it

* The Socinians strongly object to several of the terms and expressions that are used in our church, as unscriptural; especially to this of the Trinity. It is acknowledged, that this word, or any aggregate epitome of this doctrine, is not to be found in holy writ. It is a compendious expression adopted by the early fathers in their controversy with the Heretics who denied this doctrine, as more convenient than a long periphrasis. It would not be too great a sacrifice for peace to give up this word, if another equally comprehensive, and of as acknowledged and determinate import, could be substituted by mutual consent. But it is well known, that this is not what our adversaries desire. Their opposition glances from the expression to the doctrine, which is so plainly inculcated in the New Testament that we dare not relinquish it, lest we should incur the curse pronounced on those who diminish from the book. See Rev. 22d ch. 19th verse.

† Letter V.

would

would be incumbent on us to reflect, whether we are not called upon to make concessions for the sake of unity, and even to enter upon a careful revision of our national belief, that we might expunge what was unscriptural. But the reverse of this is so far acknowledged by our adversaries, that as they cannot by the most minute investigation, the most subtle arguments, the most strained concessions, and every varied rule of interpretation, get rid of the numerous and stubborn texts which not only press hard upon, but actually annihilate their notions, they have been forced to say, that Scripture was *early interpolated* for the purposes of the Trinitarians. No attempt at proving the time or place when this was done has ever been made; indeed, as there is not the smallest historical testimony to support this assertion, they are forced to rest it upon conjecture. They tell us, that marginal

notes, written by some partizan of our cause, may have been foisted into the original text, through the ignorance, carelessness, or bigotry of the transcribers. But then all transcripts of the Bible must have had these marginal notes, and all transcribers must have acted in concert (a supposition that would prove all the early Christians to have been Trinitarians); for it is difficult to conceive how these faults in any particular copy, or set of men, could occasion an *exactly similar* change in the thousands of thousand manuscripts of the New Testament that certainly had been in existence previous to the discovery of the art of printing.

The Unitarians again assert, that these mysterious doctrines are often contained in passages evidently parenthetical. Is the parenthesis only used by sacred writers; is it not a common licence adopted by all authors, especially early ones; and has
the

the genuineness of the text of any antient classic been disputed, merely because of the involution of his sentences? We might further ask, if all, or even the greater part of texts asserting the divinity and the atonement of our Lord are of this description; but the gross absurdity of a charge, of which they do not attempt to give any proof, scarcely deserves confutation.

Another mode of evasion has also been adopted. We are told, that our present received gospels, &c. are “far from being
 “ unchanged, or the only ones given and
 “ used heretofore on *equally allowed* au-
 “ thority.” This affirmation must indeed considerably alarm the unlearned female Christian, who may well tremble with the apprehension that what she considers as her charter of salvation, is only a mutilated fragment full of errors and unwarranted doctrines; in short, the composition

G 5
sition

sition of priest-craft and fraud, or the melancholy wreck of a clearer and more instructive title to the kingdom of her father. But let her be comforted ; this is an *assertion*, not a *fact*. Other histories of the Life of our Saviour have indeed existed, and other compositions have been attributed to the apostles ; but they were only human imitations of divinely tutored originals ; or the pious, though unauthenticated, compositions of well-meaning, but uninspired men ; which never had any authority in the church, though they might be occasionally read by individuals, as we read literary forgeries, or continuations of the works of different authors by inferior hands. Our learned divines have proved, by unanswerable arguments, that though early heretics forged spurious gospels to support their false doctrines, the primitive church detected and disowned them. The quotations
made

made from the gospels and epistles which we now possess, are so numerous in the works of the fathers of the second and third centuries, that they almost amount to a transcript of the New Testament. The interpolation of passages, or change of treatises, which our opponents pretend to have happened, must therefore have taken place in the first century; that is to say, during the life-time of Saint John, who is known to have survived till anno 94; and his own gospel, which on the earliest calculation was not written till 70, must have been more interpolated and altered than any other part of scripture, and this even during his life. Till we are shewn an historical record which proves when and how this was done, we will simply answer, *the crime was impossible.*

Another supposition has been started, which it is to be feared may open a new
 G 6 door

door for controversy ; this is an opinion that the first three evangelists wrote from some common document, from which they paraphrastically transcribed their respective gospels. This is the suggestion of a very learned commentator, who, in his desire to produce a perfect harmony among the sacred writers, and to account for every lesser difficulty which a critical scrutiny may find in their narratives, hazarded an opinion, probably without fully appreciating the alarming conclusions that might be drawn from such a concession, sanctioned by such a name. No stronger proof can be given that such a document never existed, than that for eighteen centuries the Christian church has never heard of it. The preface to St. Luke's gospel, about which so much has been lately said, far from warranting the idea of one *sanctioned original* history of the life of Christ, positively asserts that many had even then

“ taken

“ taken in hand to set forth in order a
 “ declaration of those things which are
 “ most surely believed.” Spurious gospels,
 therefore, existed at that time, as well
 as the genuine compositions of St. Matthew
 and St. Mark. The similitude of expression
 between the evangelists, which induced Mr.
 Marsh to form this novel and unsatisfactory
 hypothesis, may, as a periodical writer justly
 remarks*, be easily accounted for, by admitting
 “ that they really did all draw from one com-
 “ mon source; but that this source was
 “ no other than the remembered conver-
 “ sations and miracles of their Lord,
 “ which they had often discussed among
 “ themselves, and which also the Holy
 “ Spirit was promised more especially to
 “ bring to their remembrance.”

With regard to the verity of the facts recorded in Scripture, we may observe,

* Anti-Jacobin Review for June, 1805, page 125.

that

that from what we now know of the spurious narratives of our Lord's life, they all joined in describing the same sort of character, and relating the same great outline of his birth, habits, doctrine, and sufferings. The early enemies of our religion also lend their unwilling testimony to the same events. When Constantine the Great established Christianity as the religion of his extended empire, the works of those who had written against it sunk into gradual contempt, and, it is certain, soon disappeared. Of all that wit and science composed against the verity of our faith, nothing remains, but a few scattered fragments of Celsus and Porphyry, two philosophers, and of the emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate; and these are preserved in the writings of those fathers who *refuted* their errors. Their arguments are so completely puerile, that they would not now unsettle the weakest Christian,
but

but their testimony to the general truth of our religion is invaluable. For these bitter enemies of Christ, who were desirous that his name should never more be heard among men, and who lived within two, three, or four hundred years of the events recorded in our gospels, acknowledged the identity, sufferings, and miracles of our Lord, and testified the general promulgation of his religion. But the point, which I now wish more particularly to observe is, that they quoted out of the Gospels, the Acts, and many of the epistles, which we *now* possess, and *not* out of any of those supposititious gospels, &c. which we are now told were of *equal* authority.

I have mentioned to you the name of Michaelis, a most laborious commentator on the original text of the New Testament, which he was anxious to bring to the greatest possible degree of verbal purity.

purity. After the most minute investigation, and collation of manuscripts and versions, he observes, " That though the
 " number of passages which assert the
 " mysterious doctrines of Christianity may
 " be lessened by the various readings
 " which occur, the proof is not weakened,
 " when we remember that the manuscripts
 " now in our possession are of various
 " dates and nations, and possessed by persons
 " of various sects and heresies, as
 " well as by the orthodox." He adds,
 " That the most important readings which
 " make an alteration in sense, relate in
 " general to subjects that have no connexion
 " with articles of faith ; by far
 " the greater part are trifling, and make
 " no alteration in the sense." His general conclusion is, " That the sacred
 " writings have been transmitted to us
 " from the earliest times to the present
 " age, without *material alteration* ; and
 " that

“ that our text, if we except the passages
 “ which are rendered doubtful by an op-
 “ position in the readings, is the same
 “ which proceeded from the hands of the
 “ apostles.”

You will, I doubt not, cordially rejoice in this testimony, which you must recollect does not come from the pen of a *fair divine*, or the devoted bigot of any sect or establishment; but from a man of uncommon erudition and eager investigation, who seems to have brought to the important study to which he devoted his life, a mind open to conviction, and ready to acquiesce in whatever conclusion truth should compel him to adopt. We unlearned Christians may enjoy the benefit of labours to which we are so unequal; and with due reverence to the venerable repositories of apostolical inspiration entrusted to our care, let us study the sacred code of life and immortality with double diligence.

gence. “ To throw away notices from
 “ Heaven, because we do not understand
 “ them, is like savages throwing gold
 “ and jewels into the sea. It is the same,
 “ if, in order to avoid difficult discussions,
 “ we *lower* them to what we think com-
 “ mon sense. Whether we understand
 “ God’s message or not, it is our business
 “ to record it faithfully ; and by prayers,
 “ sermons, hymns, &c. to imprint it on
 “ our minds*.”

We must not, therefore, out of af-
 fected respect to the scruples of others,
 presume to dispute the *terms* on which we
 are offered the gift of eternal life. Nor
 can a Liturgical service be framed so as
 to suit Socinian scruples, with which we
ought to be contented. It is melancholy,
 therefore, to discover, that with this so-
 ciety, who call themselves by the name of
 Christ, we *must* not be in communion.

* Hey’s Lectures.

There

There cannot be—"one Lord, one faith, "one baptism," with those who may rather be said to fabricate than receive their creed; who deny the most important sense in which Christ is our Lord; and who, in baptism, do not allow of that dedication to the blessed Trinity, which, as enjoined by the highest authority, we dare not omit*. With them, the sacrament of the Lord's supper is merely a commemoration of a benefactor; with us, it is a feast upon a sacrifice, or the setting forth of our Lord's death until he come;

* The Monthly Reviewers for October 1804, page 216, inquire "what advantage the pious author" of a work then under consideration "can suppose the youthful reader will derive, from being told that the Trinity created the world?" I suppose the youthful reader is one who has been dedicated to the Trinity in baptism. He must therefore derive some valuable information in learning (if he has never before been taught) that the God whom he has vowed to obey is the Creator of all things visible and invisible in Heaven and in Earth.

being

being as truly designed to indicate and shew our faith in, and reliance on the merits of Christ's death, as the anterior sacrifices of the Mosaical law were designed to convey, to the souls of all who sincerely offered them, the benefits arising from the death of the Lamb of God, slain in the counsels of the Most High before the foundation of the world. The change, therefore, to which we are invited in the most specious terms, is not light and trivial; it is not to abandon "a few obsolete creeds, " musty articles, and unmeaning forms." It is, to reject the inward and spiritual meaning of those outward and visible signs which were instituted by Christ himself. It is observed, that the two great doctrines, of the atonement, and the Trinity, form the most marked distinctions between the Mahomedan and the Christian faith*. May the Almighty expedite the fulfilment of

* See Lady W. Montague's Letters, vol. 2d, page 6, 3d Edition.

those

those prophecies, which, from present appearances, seem to be rapidly unfolding; and may we, with our mistaken brethren, who have long believed in the lying testimony of the Arabian impostor, meet a social worship before the altar of the true God! but this event cannot be forwarded by our renunciation of the truths which are committed to our charge. Whenever the seven golden candlesticks shall be replaced in the desolated cities of Asia Minor, and the seven angels, purified by afflictions, return with renovated strength to their re-edified churches, the song of the thrice holy Lord, and the praises of "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who was slain and behold he liveth," must echo through the long silent walls, as it did in those early times when true Christianity flourished in those beautiful regions, under the fostering care of the beloved disciple.

You

You will perhaps be told, that as the Scriptures were written in the East, the lively metaphors, bold allusions, and strained similitudes, which are so congenial to oriental idioms will be made to imply more than was originally intended, if literally translated into our vernacular tongue; and you will be particularly shewn, that the term Son of God has been applied to many created beings. Three passages of Scripture will be sufficient to enable you to escape the danger of this cautionary suggestion. Is there any scriptural evidence, that a created being was ever joined with the Almighty in the solemn act of dedication or benediction? The archangel Michael is said to be the guardian angel of the Jews; he is also described as high among the heavenly host, if not the highest. Moses was the most honoured of the human race; he was the mediator through whom God made the first solemn covenant with mankind;

kind : in this, as well as in his personal and intimate intercourse with the Deity, and in his prophetic and legislative capacity, he is no unfit comparison to our Saviour. Were the infant Israelites dedicated to God, Michael, and Moses? Did God, Michael, and Moses, bless the people? The form of our initiatory sacrament was prescribed by Christ himself: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*." The apostolical benediction is as decisive: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen †."

Our Lord's reply to the High Priest, as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of St. Mark, gives a still stronger attestation

* Matthew, 28th chapter, 19th verse.

† 2d Corinthians, 13th chapter, 14th verse.

You will perhaps have observed, that the Scriptures were written in a very lively metaphorical and strained manner, and are not confined to any one sense, but imply a variety of meanings. On which the sanhedrin

condemned him to death, as being guilty of blasphemy. If the title that our Lord here assumed only meant, as the Socinians say, Messiah or prophet, the Jews would not have condemned him for blasphemy, but imposture. The pretended crime, therefore, for which our Lord was doomed to die, was the declaring himself to be the Son of God in that sense of the word which the most learned of the Jewish nation (who were accustomed to its other definitions) considered to be *blasphemous*; that is, as assuming the divine nature*.

* See the 3d chapter of John, 13th verse, which ascribes ubiquity to our Lord.

But,

say some, " Reason can never
 nor strengthen a faith which is
 ictory to it ; nor is it possible
 an unprejudiced mind to be-
 a wise and good Creator will
 mode of faith, to regulate
 conduct of his dependant creatures,
 " wholly inconsistent with, and repugnant
 " to, that faculty with which he has in a
 " supreme degree endowed them, in order
 " to guide and direct them in judging of
 " right from wrong." If Christianity, as
 taught by our national church, really were
 such a mode, we might doubt how it
 could be defended. But mysterious, or,
 as they are sometimes called, unintelligible
 doctrines, are of two kinds ; one of which
 is above our comprehension, the other
 contradictory to our experience or our
 feelings. It is contradictory to all our
 received opinions, to make God the au-
 thor of evil, and delighting in the destruc-

tion of his creatures, or willing their damnation from arbitrary motives. It is contradictory to our senses to say, that three are one, and that one is three; but we do not violate any natural or moral sense, when we say, Scripture has revealed to us, that with the most perfect unity of counsel and nature in the Godhead, there is a diversity of person; or that the wilful disobedience of Adam so far debased his nature, that it is impossible for his offspring, of themselves, to attain such degrees of piety and holiness, as would gain the approbation of a perfectly pure and righteous God. I am persuaded, that many a sceptic, who starts at these propositions, admits many facts in natural philosophy equally mysterious; I mean equally beyond the clear comprehensions of our limited faculties; and I greatly wonder, that those who reject them on the score of their being contrary to reason and analogy, can yet profess their

their belief in the properties of magnetism and electricity. If we were commanded to tell why or how these things are so ordered, we might allowably start at what would then really be "a hard saying;" but we are only required to acknowledge that such things *are*, and this on the weight of such evidence as *was never before offered to the world*. Added to this, we are also assured, that as the understanding of an infant by a gradual progress ripens into the knowledge of the man; "so we, who now
 " can only know in part, shall hereafter
 " know even as we are known."

The evidence on which Christianity is offered to our acceptance, is not disputed by our present adversaries, because they also affect to receive it as an originally divine, but since falsified, revelation. It may, however, be expedient to remind you, that, beside its antecedent attestation, prophecy, and its accompanying
 H 2 testimony,

testimony, miracle*, the inimitably conceived and exquisitely original character of our Saviour, so perfectly similar in all the gospels, and so unlike every other that has been exhibited to our view, is to us, in these latter ages, a wonderfully corroborating proof of its divine origin. The sufferings of the first preachers of our faith, its speedy promulgation in defiance of all human methods to oppose its course, the dignity of its sentiments, and the unrivalled purity and precision of its moral precepts, are all circumstances which, when minutely investigated, attest

* The miracles of the New Testament, it should ever be remembered, were a series of facts tending to establish a supernatural mission. What is in itself incredible, becomes a proof of divine interposition when referred to some important end. It is thus that the miracles of the gospel were distinguished from all other lying wonders, which are described as tending to no end at all, or to a criminal or trifling purpose.

“ that

“ that this work and counsel came from
“ God *.”

The praise which is justly due to the exalted morality of the gospel, brings me to the point wherein we differ both from the Calvinistic and Socinian school. The former, by supposing man to be so wholly dependant that it is impossible for him even to *assist* in working out his own salvation, by implication accuse our divine instructor of inconsistency, in prescribing a law which, on the one hand, it was impossible for us to obey, and on the other,

* The justly-celebrated work of Archdeacon Paley, on the Evidences of Christianity, and the Treatise on the Authenticity of the Scriptures, by the learned Mr. Bryant, may here be recommended to the attention of young women, as perspicuous and satisfactory, capable of strengthening their faith, without engaging them in a maze of controversy.—Some excellent remarks on the incidents, manners, sentiments, and expressions of the Gospels, may be found in Hey's Lectures, vol. 1st, page 138.

if we did, would not have rendered us more acceptable to the Deity. The latter, by representing Christ as a mere *moral* teacher, or the prophet of the resurrection and life everlasting, omit the real purpose of his coming upon earth; namely, the redemption of the world. It corresponds with what we should suppose of the infinitely wise and holy God (as our Church always acknowledges), that Christ should instruct his followers in the laws of righteousness; but that this was the ultimate end of our Lord's mission is denied by our best divines; who justly observe, that *no new discoveries can be made in morals.* Our Lord perfected the natural notices of reason and conscience, and increased the knowledge which the Mosaical law had diffused of moral obligation; removing the obligation to purity from visible actions, to the unseen, and almost unacknowledged, intentions of our hearts; teaching

teaching us to eradicate the seeds of those evil inclinations which are within us, when they first begin to shoot forth ; and exciting us to holiness, not so much by any particular specific compliance with any prescribed rule, as by a general determination of doing every thing to the glory of God. Yet our Lord did not teach these sublime ethics as a regular system, or as the express purpose for which he was come into the world. Except in a few passages (the sermon on the Mount, for instance), moral improvement seems to rise, incidentally, from reflections that were more intimately connected with his character as the Redeemer of the world. The beautiful parable of the prodigal son was not intended to enforce relenting tenderness to offended fathers ; but to inculcate the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, then first authoritatively preached to the world. To us, the good Samaritan

teaches universal benevolence ; but it was originally meant to shew the prejudiced Jew, that the partition wall between him and the Gentile was about to be broken down ; and that even the hated Samaritan, the impostor* who reviled his religion, the enemy who cruelly triumphed in his distress †, was *virtually* his neighbour.

It will appear, that moral instruction was not the principal purpose of our Lord's mission, by attentively considering the preparatory ministry of the Baptist. This extraordinary personage had all the marks of a reformer of merely human origin. Austere in his manners, blameless in his conduct, singular in habit, bold in reproof, superior even to the innocent indulgences of natural appetite, unawed by danger, unseduced by flattery, he
 “ preached in the wilderness the baptism

* St. John, 4th chapter, 22d verse.

† Nehemiah, 4th chapter, 8th verse.

“ of repentance for the remission of sins.” No system of ethics could be more strict than the Baptist’s, no reprover of vice could be more free from sinister designs or criminal indulgences. From the despised, and almost infamous publican, with whom the meanest Jew scorned to associate, to Herod on the throne of tributary royalty, his penetrating eye discovered vice, and his energetic voice boldly reproved it, and enjoined the opposite course of virtue and integrity. When we consider that this new Elias was foretold by prophecy, and prefigured by type, that his birth was miraculous, and that he too died in confirmation of the doctrine he taught, why, may we not ask, did we need another moral teacher to repeat the same precepts and endure similar sufferings? Yet we have all the testimony that the positive assertion of Scripture can give, to shew that the baptism of John was insufficient

to salvation. Himself acknowledges the inferiority of his introductory office. With all the noble candour suited to his exalted merit, he anticipates and rejoices in the future triumphs of him who was to eclipse his fame and supersede his office. “ He
 “ it is,” said the magnanimous Ascetic,
 “ who, coming after me, is preferred before me. He must increase, but I must
 “ decrease. He that hath the bride is
 “ the bridegroom; but the friend of the
 “ bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of
 “ the bridegroom’s voice. This my joy,
 “ therefore, is fulfilled.” He refers every inquirer to the true Messiah, whose coming he was merely to announce; and so entire was his conquest over the most lively passions of human nature, that he sends two of his own converts to Christ, with this sublime intimation, “ Behold
 “ the Lamb of God, who taketh away
 “ the

“ the sins of the world*.” The insufficiency of repentance, without faith in Christ, is clearly affirmed in two passages of the Acts ; namely, the 18th chapter, 25th and 26th verses ; and the 19th chapter and 2d verse ; where it is judged necessary, that those converts who had only received the former (or John’s) baptism, should have the way of God expounded to them more perfectly, and receive the initiatory rite of the Christian faith.

The eternity of hell-torments, is a subject upon which we differ from the Socinians ; and many persons, who reject the other errors of that sect, entertain a hope, that after a certain period, when the punishment of sinners can no longer answer the purpose of deterring offenders, it will not be continued as a means of vengeance. Dr. Hey observes, that it is owing to the

* See the Bishop of London’s Lectures on the Gospel of St. Matthew.

moderation of our Church, that her ministers are not called upon to *subscribe* to this doctrine of eternal torments, which was part of the original articles in the reign of Edward the Sixth.

The terms everlasting death, everlasting fire, and other similar expressions in our liturgy, are taken from Scripture ; and whether they are to be considered in their full tremendous import, or in the more limited sense of long duration, I presume not to determine. I think (with submission to the learning and piety of those who have descanted upon this awful subject) this is one of those secret purposes of God into which it is *presumptuous* to attempt to penetrate. Our interpretation of his decree in this point will not affect its nature or duration ; and if the terrors of eternal punishment are found insufficient to deter sinners from guilt, or to awaken them to repentance, surely holding forth more
lenient

lenient prospects may tend to encourage them in sin ; and what excuse will they, who suggest these false hopes, make at the day of judgment, if they shall then be found to have proceeded without the warranty of Scripture, and only on those notions of *reasonableness* and *expediency* which must be futile when opposed by the express word of God ? We may further observe, that these threatenings to sinners are couched in the *same terms*, in respect to duration, with the promises of eternal life to the righteous ; and as we hope that millions of years will not diminish the happiness of the blessed, may we not fear that the sufferings of the impenetrably wicked will be commensurate ? At least, let us rest assured, that the wrath of a long-suffering and placable God, when roused by obstinate and determined guilt, must be infinitely terrible. We do not limit his mercy by exhorting all men to fear his
vengeance.

vengeance. The charge, that we take delight in gloomy doctrines, and deliver our fellow-creatures to endless damnation without remorse, is equally false and injurious. Our voice at the day of judgment will be lifted up in imploring pardon for ourselves, not in imprecating punishment on others; and if our Clergy refuse to disguise or to palliate the threatened terrors of the Lord, and dissuade men from dangerous speculations, it is not from cruelty or bigotry, but from that Christian charity which seeks to enlarge the kingdom of the blessed. No man was ever driven from religion by believing the *threatenings* of the Almighty:

The future state of the heathen world, is another subject on which much discussion has arisen. I know not that it is properly connected with the present controversy; for I believe our Church has not
officially:

officially declared any further opinion on the subject, than what is contained in the eighteenth article; namely, that “we cannot be saved by obedience to the laws or religion we profess; but, solely, by the merits of Christ.” This most scriptural doctrine has been strained by our adversaries into a positive sentence of damnation to the whole heathen world; but the charge only proves, that they who bring it are tyros in theology. Why we are saved, and by what we shall be judged, are very distinct inquiries. “There is no other name under Heaven by which men can be saved but that of Jesus Christ;” but it is certain, “he died for all the world* ;” and we are also assured, “that the Judge of all the earth will do right.” At the great day of audit, we Christians shall be judged by

* Article 31st. This article should be compared with the 18th, which it illustrates.

the

the holy law that we have received ; the Jews*, by their preparatory covenant ; the Gentiles, by the law of nature. We are only concerned with what relates to our own state ; but if curiosity prompt us to search further, the 11th. of St. Matthew's Gospel 21st verse, the 12th chapter 41st and 42d verses, and Romans the 2d chapter. 11th and following verses, will shew us by what rules justice will be meted to the heathen world. Our reformers were too well versed in Scripture to overlook such plain testimony ; but we cannot wonder that the Socinians should endeavour to misrepresent the 18th article ; it being framed against the Pelagian heresy, of which their's is a branch.

I will now request your candid attention to a few remarks on the wonderful coincidence between the covenants of

* This is only meant of those Jews who lived before the coming of Christ, or who have never heard of the Messiah.

grace, the ordinary dealings of Divine Providence, and the works of nature. I make them with a full consciousness of my own inadequacy to the subject; which yet appeared to me to be too striking and apposite to be wholly omitted in a work of this kind, intended for readers to whom popular topics are most useful. What I say, may probably induce others to meditate on what must confirm their faith, and to pursue the inquiries which must present themselves to their minds, till they shall become able to give suitable answers to gainsayers, who are generally more competent to *make* than to *answer* objections. I am convinced, that if this species of argument were pursued with the learning and ability necessary to give it full force*, a deist would find it diffi-

* The Author has heard that Butler's Analogy proceeds on this plan. She regrets not having read it till after the publication of the two first editions of this work.

cult to decry revelation on the ground of its being opposite to the divine attributes; and he must either take refuge in the deep gloom of atheism, or acknowledge that, as the Most High speaks the same language in his revealed will, as he does in the visible creation, the holy Scriptures bear indubitable marks of proceeding from the Creator of the world.

It has been asked, why, if so many blessings and privileges are annexed to the profession of Christianity, it has been so limited in its extent? why do not all the nations of the earth, why did not all past generations rejoice in the rising of this Sun of Righteousness? It has been answered; that if Christians are blessed with a purer law and better promises, they also incur a more fearful responsibility. They are the servants entrusted with ten talents, while only one is committed to the charge of pagan ignorance. But may not the
naturalist

naturalist ask these sceptics to account why the earth is not one temperate zone ? why the vegetating powers of light and heat are unequally bestowed ; so that the inhabitants of Africa scorch beneath a vertical sun, while the human stature shrinks to dwarfish deformity, and the mind chills into idiotic insensibility, in the polar regions, where the summer sun, enveloped in mist, and shorn of its golden effulgence, creeps in a narrow circle along the distant verge of the horizon*, and gives a long protracted day, that affords neither variety, plenty, nor that sweet vicissitude of rest, and toil, which the quick succession of day and night bestows on happier climates ? Are the Esquimaux and the Greenlanders offspring of another

* See this circumstance beautifully described in Acerbi's Travels, who viewed this awful appearance of the sun from the lofty promontory that forms the northern extremity of Lapland.

Creator;

Creator ; or, is “ the God of all the families of the earth,” to them only a severe and cruel Lord, instead of a kind and indulgent parent ? The naturalist will receive a similar answer to what the vindicators of Christianity have given. These apparently miserable beings have their peculiar joys. . The story of the Greenlander who pined in captivity, and repeatedly attempted to escape from all the comforts of a milder climate and civilized life, proves that we do not indulge a merely poetical fancy, when we describe them as attached to “ their long night of revelry and ease.” Yet we must allow, that to our judgment there is a great apparent inequality of blessings ; and if we be wise, we shall not pursue this subject into insolent cavils against the impartial justice of God, but rest in saying, “ secret things belong to the Most High.”

Corresponding to this is my next observation. Why, it has often been asked,
was

was the seed of Abraham selected as the peculiar people of God, and honoured with a clearer notion of the divine nature than other nations who appeared to be more deserving? Ingenious Greece, martial Rome, learned Egypt, and refined Persia, served gods of wood and stone, images of the most licentious of mortals, or even resemblances of brute beasts and creeping things; while “a stiff-necked stubborn generation,” undistinguished in the history of the world, the illiberal prejudiced inhabitants of a narrow slip of land, without power, arts, or commerce, were made the repositories of the laws and promises of God.

We might answer, that, as the Jews are the only early nation of whom we possess an *impartial* history, it is very probable that they were not so much inferior to their contemporaries as is supposed; but, on the contrary, as their prophets re-
corded

recorded their crimes and disgraces for ex-
 ample's sake, while other historians chiefly
 dwelt on the renown and the virtues of
 their countrymen, we have reason to think
 that these despised people really might
 possess more merit than those who have
 been so highly extolled, though they fell
 far short of that holiness which their
 peculiar endowments required. Martial
 celebrity, in particular, it is well known,
 rarely increases the moral virtues of any
 people. But, waving this defence, we
 direct the objector's attention to the ordi-
 nary dispensations of Providence, and ask
 him to tell us why are wisdom, strength,
 beauty, learning, taste, riches, power, and
 any other endowment of mind or body, or
 any relative advantage, so diversely, and,
 as it should seem, capriciously bestowed;
 since often they neither reward nor ac-
 company desert, but, on the other hand,
 frequently seem to be more of a trial than
 a blessing

a blessing to their immediate possessor? Few men were more eminently endowed with graces and talents than our illustrious Cranmer; yet from the period of his attracting the notice of the capricious and tyrannical Henry, till, at the mandate of that blood-thirsty monarch's more cruel daughter, our venerable archbishop expired in tortures, his days were consumed by continual anxiety, peril, and sorrow; for he held his domestic comforts, and even his life, by the most dubious and uncertain tenure. May we not say, that he was raised up by Providence as an extraordinary instrument to forward the work of reformation in this country: and that his wonderful endowments were more a blessing to others than to himself, at least so far as relates to this state of existence? This is one instance, but thousands might be given, of superior abilities *instrumentally* bestowed, from which the possessor reaped little

little *individual* advantage or enjoyment. Other equally numerous cases might be suggested, in which, though the gift was evidently misapplied and ill bestowed, it was not withdrawn ; especially the gift of power, of which we have seen in these days a fearful example ; the ability of doing further injury, appearing to increase with the misapplication of the means of doing good. If all these instances do not shake our belief in the general government of a wise and good Providence, why should our faith be staggered (allowing the Jews to have been as unworthy as their enemies represent), because the lively oracles of God were entrusted to a people who reaped comparatively few advantages from the sacred deposit ; and who, though they were alternately rebellious apostates and miserable captives, yet approved themselves equal to the task that was required of them, by faithfully preserving their sacred trust.

The

The analogy between all the various parts of animated and inanimate nature ; the suitability of parts to the whole, and of the whole to parts ; the fitness of each element to the creatures that inhabit it ; the admirable appropriation of labour to day, and rest to night ; these and various other coincidences in the works of God are admirably delineated by a Christian philosopher, with whose instructive and popular work on Natural Theology every young woman above the lower classes would do well to be intimately acquainted ; for it teaches us, that God is the God of order, and that design, *minute intricate* design, pervades every branch of creation. And shall the sceptic scoffingly question the divine authority of the Jewish ceremonial law, because it seems derogatory from his notion of the dignity of the high and only One who inhabits eternity, to specify the forms and dimensions of the

curtains, the rings, the candlesticks, the sockets, the bars, the shovels, the flesh-hooks, and the fire-pans that were to be used in his sanctuary; or the ephod, breast-plate, embroidery, and mitre of his consecrated high priest? Idle reviler of what thou dost not understand, this is the same God who formed the proboscis of a bee with such just proportion, and who painted the tufted crest of a gnat with such diversified colours. It is by a thousand imperceptible, yet nicely adjusted, mechanical contrivances, seemingly as unimportant in the wide system of universal nature, that thou art now able to raise thy voice against him who endowed thee with ability to employ the exquisitely organized muscles which constitute that property.

I will here stop to make a remark rather than a comparison. Scientific observations generally ascend in a climax from the least perfect to the most highly finished.

finished. Is it in imitation of the order of creation, or is this coincidence (as I suspect) an undesigned analogy? The book of Genesis was written before system and arrangement were established among the learned; yet let us observe the gradation in which the various productions of the earth appeared; first grass, then herbs and plants, trees, fishes, birds, beasts, and lastly, man. The scale gradually rises in importance; and ends in the delegated Lord of animated nature.

It is asked, why was God's design of redeeming the world so long enveloped in obscurity, and at last so partially and cautiously revealed? Should it not, instead of being darkly shadowed in metaphor, type, and allegory, imparted in prophetic visions to a few individuals, and, as it should seem, *shrouded* in mystery from the generality of mankind, have been proclaimed by angels, announced by astonishing prodigies,

digies, and *forced* by incontestable attestations on an assenting world? We may answer, that faith, like virtue, must have its trials; and that when incontrovertible evidence bears down opposition, acquiescence has no claim to approbation. But very high authority* permits me to recognize a similitude between this gradual developement of the Christian covenant, and the slow perfectionating of the natural world. I shall confine my observations to the progressive state of the human understanding from childhood to manhood.—Why are we brought into the world less perfect in respect to our nature, and more dependant, than any other creature; feeble and helpless in body; weak, and almost idiotic, in mind? Who, in the irritable and tender infant, which appears to be only alive to animal sensations,

* The Bishop of St. David's.

can

can trace the dawning genius of a Milton, or the clear intellect of a Newton? and when the understanding begins to unfold, how slow is its progress! A fifth part of the active period of our lives is consumed in the mere acquisition of elementary knowledge, and another fifth nearly transpires in connecting and methodizing those acquisitions, in gaining a complete knowledge of the trade or profession by which we are to earn our livelihood, or in obtaining that acquaintance with men and things which is called experience. Would it not have been more suitable to the dignity and happiness of a rational creature, at least would it not have conduced much more to the improvement of the arts and sciences, if we had come into the world with all our faculties perfect, and capable of being immediately exerted on the stage of trial? It would be impossible to doubt but God *could* have thus formed us. We

are also sure, that if he had so pleased, the obedience of the second Adam might have immediately succeeded to the offence of the first. In either instance, it seemed good to the Almighty to determine otherwise. And as the wants of human nature in infancy exercise the tenderness and patience of mature age; so may we say in respect to the promulgation of Christianity, such a degree of evidence has been imparted as is sufficient to *exercise* the faith, not to *overwhelm* the understanding, of probationary beings.

It is universally allowed by those who have thought deeply upon the subject, that the pure and sublime doctrines of Christianity are most suited to a highly civilized and improved state of society. It was therefore withheld from the dark eyes of the early world, when man first felt the fatal consequences of “that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste brought
“ death

“ death into the world, and all our woe.”

Abandoned in a great measure by supernatural aid, and left to his own mis-rule, man slowly and by painful experience gathered those fruits of knowledge for which he had forfeited the tree of life. Our religion (we urge this in triumph to our enemies) was produced to mankind at a time when human intellect had exerted all its capability, when science, learning, acuteness, and curiosity, had reached its height. Like the more abstruse and difficult parts of learning, it was adapted to the *manhood* of the world. Whether, from some subtle mechanical arrangement that has eluded human research, it is a necessary part of the present formation of our souls to unfold their powers slowly, and expand with the extension of the corporal frame in which they are incased, it is improbable that any anatomist will be able to discover while he himself is in the

body; but, allowing (as most political observers do) that the stages of society correspond with those of the individual in gradual melioration and decay, we must acknowledge that our Saviour, by appearing in the Augustan age, chose the period most favourable to the investigation and reception of his doctrines. The text that terms him “the Lamb slain from “the foundation of the world,” will here be present to your mind; and you will remember it is expressly revealed, that the *benefits* of his sacrifice were *retrospective* as well as *future*.

The apparent dissolution and revivification of seed in the earth, is compared to the restoration of man from the grave, by the inspired Apostle of the Gentiles, with all the bold illustration of sublime simplicity. No comparison can be more just, no analogy more convincing, and (we may also say) consolatory. Those precious

cious relics, my dear Miss M——, which ~~we~~ have seen committed to the earth, would, if now exposed to inspection, disgust our loathing eye, and excite at once grief and horror. But they contain the apparently perished, though really unfolding, seed of immortality. Or, to change the figure, the exuviae of (in the instance to which I allude, the strongest expressions of Christian hope are permissible) a *glorified being*, who at the hour determined in the counsels of the Most High shall burst from its incrusting mass of corruption, and rise to its promised blessedness. You have often watched the torpid chrysalis, which is another expressive symbol of the state of mortality. Could you, unless experience had prepared you for the event, expect a beautiful winged animal to burst from that shapeless and sluggish mass? When you see the earth desolate and disconsolate in winter,

could you, without previous notice, conceive that its present dreary and inanimate appearance was only a *suspension* of its productive powers, or that the great work of vegetation was even then proceeding in the seemingly withered fibres of the naked plants that surround you? We are so prepared to expect these events, that we cease to think them surprizing; but their constant recurrence should teach us to rest with undoubting confidence in the promises of that God, who has assured us, that, like the grain we cast into the earth, our mortal bodies will most *truly* live after they have *seemed* to die.

My next observation rather relates to the dispensations of Providence in the relative situation of mankind, than to an express doctrine of revelation; but as the conditions of high and low, rich and poor, are sanctioned by the authority of holy writ, which propounds to each rank its
 respective

respective and distinguishing duties, and also by the testimony of our only authentic account of the infant world, which assures us that such distinctions have taken place from the earliest times; it will not be foreign to my purpose to call your attention to the various gradations, both in rank and value, that are visible in the creation, and the close connection between the respective orders, with the advantages which are mutually derived from this difference of destination and diversity of faculties. If our observations commence in the celestial regions, we shall not only perceive, in the language of St. Paul, that "one star differeth from another star in glory;" but we shall also, by means of the mechanical instruments that have assisted the wonderful discoveries of astronomy in latter times, ascertain that they differ also in size, quality, and use. One star is a globe of kindled mat-

ter ever burning, yet never consumed ; another, a dense opaque substance, resembling (as far as our distant inspection can discover) the orb on which we reside. These latter revolve (shall we say *duteously* or *advantageously* ?) around the animating centre from which they in “ their golden “ urns draw light.” Again, as the most perfect order is observed in their motions, so there seems to be a difference in the properties bestowed upon them, which points out their relative rank in the creation ; for while the comparatively diminutive orb of Mercury scorches in the vicinity of that immense luminary which enforces his near attendance by a more powerful exercise of the magnetic influence of attraction ; Saturn, and the newly-discovered Georgium Sidus, fixed near the outer verge of the space which our Sun illuminates, as diligently perform their stupendous rotations around a spheroid,

roid, which, if their worlds and the visual organs of their supposed inhabitants, are constituted like ours, affords them but little more light and comfort than we derive from the faint rays of the dog-star. Yet are these solitary and cheerless regions governors (may I not use this term to indicate commanding influence?) of several opaque attendants, who respectively await on them, and afford, by their mutually refracted light, those advantages which their remote situation from the common centre would not otherwise allow them to enjoy.

The same law of distinction of degree, and reciprocity of benefit, extends through every rank of *created* being. The benefits which we derive from the animal creation are too many, and too well known, to need any enumeration. Nor can it be doubted, but that, while man fulfils his original design of being the ruler, not the tyrant

tyrant of the visible world, all domestic creatures who have submitted to his government derive many comforts from his prescience and humane attention to their wants and misfortunes. You will, perhaps, think me degenerating into sophistry, or trifling, and quote against me the couplets of Pope, "Man exclaims, "see all things for my use; See man for mine, &c.;" but certainly it is not merely for his own species that man labours. "The birds of heaven will vindicate their grain;" and in a well-cultivated country the most valuable and useful, as well as the most happy tribes of irrational existence receive an amazing increase. Do we not also see, in all animals submitted to our minute observation, degrees of beauty, symmetry, strength, swiftness, and, in many, diversity of understanding? The inference is plain, and strictly applicable to the variety of talent, fortune, and happiness.

piness which is proportioned among the human race. In this respect, certainly, God made men to differ ; since by their diversity of rank the world is made capable of containing a larger number of inhabitants, and all are bound together by that chain of mutual convenience and dependance which, if rightly considered, must prepare our minds not only for mere benevolence, but for the exercise of that sublime virtue Christian charity. I will conclude this observation by reminding you, that as revelation always presupposes natural religion, this order and cohesion of all the parts of creation was one of those striking notices of the Deity, which St. Paul often reproves his heathen converts for not having regarded*.

I wish here to introduce an idea that floats in my mind, but of the philosophical or theological precision of which I

* See Romans, 1st chapter, 19th verse.

dare not be confident. I will preface it with a remark of Dr. Hey's, who observes*, that "he recollects nothing in the account Moses gives of the creation, that is *contrary* to modern discoveries in the planetary system." This seems a wonderful confirmation of the divine origin of the pentateuch, especially considering the state of science at the time he wrote, and that revelation was not intended to improve it. I offer it as my humble opinion, that the modern conclusion respecting the probability of a plurality of *inhabited* worlds, is rather strengthened than weakened by holy writ. Near two hundred generations of men have finished their mortal course since the creation of this earth. We are assured,

* Hey's Lectures, vol. i. page 196. This observation may be extended to what St. Paul says of the apparent glory of the stars; it being equally true of their real superiority of purpose.

that:

that the souls of all these exist either in happiness or misery, waiting their reunion to their seemingly annihilated bodies; the particles of which must, after having passed through a variety of changes, now form no inconsiderable part of this terrestrial globe. Of the nature and wants of spiritual existence, we know very little. Scripture informs us, that angels are spirits, and gives us frequent accounts of their *visibly* ministering to mankind. Whether they assumed the appearance of a bright glorified body, in compliance with our limited organs of perception; or whether such a body be an essential part of their existence, we know not. We generally find, that the description of an angelical vision includes the circumstance of their being clothed in white or shining garments; and they are frequently said to have partaken of those earthly aliments which contribute to the support of our gross.

gross and material bodies. "Angels food" is more than once mentioned in Scripture, especially as a descriptive epithet of that sustenance which fed the children of Israel in the wilderness. These may be all symbolical allusions, or assumed properties adapted to our present senses, or they may be real notices of the state of the invisible world. Supposing them to be the latter, I do not see how we can oppose them by those conclusions of any essential difference between matter and spirit, which arise merely from our having only analyzed the former quality as far as we can discover its inherent principles in this world. He surely would be a hardy chemist who should assert, that material substance may not be so modified in other parts of the universe as to conduce to the preservation of spirit or glorified matter, and that (according to the sublime painting of the apocalypse) "the trees of heaven" may

"may not bring forth fruit" meet for the sustenance of its blessed inhabitants. The fine poetical use which Milton makes of this scriptural description is too well known to require quotation; especially as I am cautious of warming your imagination, where I wish to recommend the utmost humility of devout inquiry.

The conclusion that presents itself to my mind is, that *many* worlds like our own are necessary for the habitation of *past* generations of the human race. Supposing that there are more probationary beings than ourselves, we shall soon find inmates for the numerous globes which we have every reason to believe roll their fully-peopled regions through the immensity of space, beside those happy glorious beings who neither die nor are born, and those depraved spirits, who have fallen from their original purity, and are become the accusers and seducers of their fellow-creatures, and who probably may
be

be allowed to wander from orb to orb till confined to some fearful region of punishment by the sentence of the last day. It seems to enlarge our conception of the immensity and coincidence of the Almighty's designs, and of the primitive dignity of man * (which is never wholly obliterated, and is capable of being completely restored by the divine mercy), to consider this minute point of the vast creation as a mother country sending out her colonies to people the starry regions. But I am so well aware of the danger and mischief that arises from a desire of starting new ideas, and I am so little capable of appreciating the conclusions that may be drawn from this opinion, that I merely suggest it because it seemed to me to be capable of silencing some objections against the Scriptures, on the score of their being contrary to philosophical deductions.

* True piety will not cavil at this expression : It was for man that the King of Glory died.

I am

I am indebted, for one analogy, to a writer with whose works I have already taken great liberty. After acknowledging that the original autographs of Scripture do not exist, Dr. Hey observes *, “ Let
 “ no one be discouraged by this : the
 “ Author of nature may be, nevertheless,
 “ the Author of the gospel ; for we are
 “ left to take the bad consequences of
 “ the carelessness of mankind in the
 “ things of nature, as well as in the dis-
 “ pensations of grace. Those who are
 “ discouraged by human accidents hap-
 “ pening to the sacred writings, seem to
 “ mistake the nature of what is called a
 “ particular providence.” You will per-
 mit me to dilate this comprehensive idea. Conformably to the covenant with Noah, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, have never ceased since the flood ; and thus God preserved a witness of his

* Hey’s Lectures, vol. 1st, page 37.

existence

existence during the night of Pagan ignorance and depravity. But to compel men to improve these dispensations with industry and intelligence, would have been to bind "human will, as well as" nature, fast in fate." The seasons return in their accustomed course; but plenty and famine are often made to depend *instrumentally* upon human exertion or skill; and thus, though the original promise has remained unbroken, its consequences have been partially suspended. The earth has never experienced an annihilation of fertility by a suspension of its products. She seemed but to wait for the necessary contingents, to command "her" "vallies to laugh and sing" beneath the burden of her plentiful crops. Husbandmen can tell you, that she proves a most trusty deposit to whatever species of vegetation has been committed to her care. A state of pasturage is so unfavourable

unfavourable to the growth of some species of plants, that they are never found in grass grounds; but let the plough be introduced, and the torpid seeds that have lain beneath the surface perhaps for a longer period than the life of man, exert their germinating power, and in a few harvests they will produce a crop that shall almost equal in quantity the lately introduced grain. Your attention to gardening has taught you the extreme difficulty, if not absolute impossibility, of eradicating indigenous plants, which, though never suffered to reach maturity, are continually threatening to overpower the flowers that you wished to cultivate. Thus careful is the God of nature of all even her meanest productions, which are very rarely destroyed either by the carelessness or the purposes of man. The observation extends to animal life: those tribes of creatures who, from their minuteness, defence-

lessness,

lessness, or disgusting qualities, seem most in danger of being annihilated, are preserved by superabundant fecundity *. It has been questioned, whether any species of plant or animal has entirely disappeared since the creation. If we contrast this long preservative with the discoveries or inventions of man, how vast is the difference!

We will not fall into an error that we condemn, by giving *identity* to a *quality*. The preservation of all the numerous tribes of animal and vegetable life does not depend upon the *care of nature*, but on *the power of God*. Scripture and ecclesiastical history afford us equal proof, that he is the same God who says all his "counsels shall stand, and that he will do all his pleasure," by the extraordinary protection he has afforded to his *written word* and *visible church*. In your biblical studies you will meet with ample

* See Paley's Natural Theology, page 385.

occasions to remark, how often the true church has been snatched like a burning brand out of the fire, when the malice of her enemies, or the corruption of her members, threatened her immediate destruction. The remark of Michaelis on the almost miraculous preservation of every essential point of faith and doctrine, amid the numerous transcripts of Scripture that have been made by ignorant, prejudiced, or careless transcribers, leads me to reflect on the extraordinary continuation of Christianity, amidst the general wreck of arts and learning which followed the overthrow of the Roman empire by the northern barbarians in the fifth century, when every thing else that was useful and elegant was obliterated by those fierce conquerors. We may again observe, that the reformed religion, emerging from papal corruption and tyrannical restraint,

straint, was truly analogous to the revivification of seed that has been long buried in the earth; and though the greater part of those who *then* laboured in the Lord's heritage seemed more desirous to *burn* the wheat than to *root* out the tares, the care of the celestial sower was wonderfully exemplified. Amid the terrors of persecution, renovated Christianity grew and flourished, and seemed, as in her early trials, to be refreshed and enriched by the blood of martyrs. In these times of peril, when the enemy tempts us with external prosperity and internal discord, it will be consolatory to us to recollect the positive assurances of Scripture, that the Church of God, when founded on the rock of Christ, cannot be overthrown. Vain are the machinations of infidel adversaries, vain are the wicked devices of false brethren. "The counsels of the Holy One of Israel are from everlasting." I need not inform

form you, that here, as in other parts of Scripture, the epithet Israel does not imply the descendants of Abraham ; but the ancient church, to which the first covenant was addressed, and which, on the death of Christ, gave place to the Christian.

We might extend our inquiries very far ; but, however instructive the research would prove, the space that I am called upon to allot to other subjects will not permit me to extend this topic. Enough has been said to prove the similitude which I wished to enforce. The Creator and Governor of the world is the God of revelation : a God of order, wisdom, justice, and mercy ; but a God who “ hideth
 “ himself, and whose ways are past find-
 “ ing out.” To this scientific philosophizing age he says, as he did in early times to the Arabian sages, “ Shall he that con-
 “ tendeth with the Almighty instruct
 “ him ? He that reproveth God, let him

“ answer it. Where wert thou when I
 “ laid the foundations of the earth? de-
 “ clare, if thou hast understanding.”

When all the mysteries of visible nature are satisfactorily solved, not by the use of *abstract indefinite* terms, not by ascribing power to matter, nor by a reference to the laws of qualities that are acted upon, instead of acting; but by explanations suited to the comprehensions of plain understandings; we may then debate upon the expediency of rejecting the mysteries relating to that part of revelation which
 “ eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
 “ neither hath it entered into the heart of
 “ man to conceive.” When we know why the loadstone attracts only one metal, why a thin covering of silk repels a subtile fluid which can penetrate the most dense bodies, nay even when we can analyze ourselves and name the organ of consciousness, or dissect the minute vessels
 of

of intellectual perception, we may with less apparent audacity talk of the supremacy of sovereign reason, and refuse to admit as truths what she cannot *fully* comprehend. In many instances, we see only the immediate agent by which God acts in the material world. In many things we discover infinite care and pains employed for apparently a trivial purpose; but as we enlarge our researches, and extend them into the more abstruse parts of nature, we become convinced that means and ends are so blended, that nothing can be said to be independent; and that what appears in itself unimportant, really is a necessary part of some superior contrivance, which also fills a subordinate station in a yet more *consequential* design. Providence acts by the same rules in human affairs. No one (unless, like Mrs. Wolstonecraft's lawless planets, they rush madly from their sphere) lives for himself.

We are formed for society; and in society we must act, or be wretched. Nothing but incurable, and, I may add, criminally indulged sorrow, or the strong enthusiasm of abstracted devotion, can support the miseries, the destitution, and the privations of total seclusion.

And is not Christianity, as taught by our church, a humanizing, a social, and benevolent theory? Admitting the consequences of Adam's transgression to imply that total depravity which is ascribed to us by those of our divines who have leaned to Calvin's notions, and that these really were the original tenets of our church* (a fact which our present, as well as our former opposers would find it *impossible* to prove), even here we shall find,

* The church of England is not founded in exact conformity to the doctrines of any reformer. The errors of Luther and Calvin were alike rejected, as was the rigid system of Zuinglius.

that

that a remedy has been provided proportionable to the disease. The hatred of the Almighty to sin (so strongly marked by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ) is not more alarming, than the proof of his mercy to sinners, which that event confirms, is consolatory: what right then have those, who affect to be distinguished by the name of Unitarians, to say, as is done in the periodical work which is considered as their organ*, "that as long
 " as the prevailing religion of a country
 " is blended with gloom, it will be no
 " easy matter to induce parents to bring
 " up children under convictions contrary
 " to their own impressions?" Equally insidious is their more recent declaration,
 " that they thought the question of the
 " divinity of Christ had been set at rest
 " for ever." Their subsequent critique

* See Monthly Review for August 1802, page 413.

on a learned work, which adds fresh confirmation to this doctrine, by shewing the peculiar use of the definitive article in the Greek language, forbids us to look upon the preceding remark as a confession of their having recanted their former opinions; and they certainly are not ignorant, that this doctrine has received the strongest confirmation by researches into Asiatic antiquities; by more acute investigation of the septuagint copy of the pentateuch; by the labours of Michaelis, who has so carefully inspected the various versions of the New Testament; and by the masterly disquisitions of many of our own divines, especially by several eminent ornaments of episcopacy who have lately turned their attention to the fundamental doctrines of our Church. It is by such bold remarks, and unfounded assertions, that they often shake the principles of the uninformed; and it is by decrying the utility of ortho-

dox

dox instruction, that they hope to recommend their own system of faith to the easy assent of the credulous.

Our dispute with our present opponents about church government, and established forms of worship, proceeds upon the principles that we had before occasion to discuss. We may briefly repeat the remark, that as union is *enjoined* by Christ, disunion is a *breach* of his command. The direct form of Christian worship is not absolutely stated in the New Testament; but numerous ceremonies were positively commanded in the Old; and we know that the orders of our hierarchy*, and many

* Dr. Hill, who writes in support of the Scotch Presbyterian church, argues strongly in favour of the union of church and state. He *admits*, that in the second century the office of bishop was separated from that of presbyter, and applied as episcopalians now use it. In the first century *we* can name, as bishops, Titus at Crete, Timothy at Ephesus, Epaphroditus

many of our liturgical forms, usages, and customs, expressly correspond with those of primitive times, to which the apostles in their epistles frequently allude. No society can exist without government; and God has not only blessed society for the ordinary uses of life; but it is to a *firmly united society, that his gospel promises are especially made.*

We will sum up all that we have said in answer to those who reject our established faith because it contains mysteries which are above our comprehension, by repeating the remark, that this is the strongest internal testimony that the revelation on which it is founded proceeds from the Author of Nature. Incomprehensibility may, in this sense, be considered as the attesting seal of the Most
High;

phroditus at Philippi, and the seven angels of the seven churches of Asia Minor. None of these were apostles.

High ; for could we have received that manifestation of our Creator as being really of divine origin, which lowered the ineffable and infinite nature of the Deity to the bounded capacity of fallible man ? It is true, our reason is capable of progressive improvement ; but by that very circumstance it is confessedly unfit, in our present infancy of existence, to contain ideas that are equal to the unbounded essence of the Power who bestowed upon us this wonderful faculty. In the management of this our prime distinction from the brute creation, the humility of a true Christian is exemplified ; for a mind duly impressed with sentiments of piety and veneration will alike fear to reject the notices of Heaven, or to pry into “ those “ secret things ” which must in this world remain unknown.

Believe me, my dear Miss M——, your most affectionate, &c.

LETTER VIII.

*On the Duty of studying the Scriptures, and
on Religious Conformity.*

MY DEAR MISS M——,

HISTORY presents such numerous examples of the disgusting extravagancies into which religious fanaticism has betrayed probably well-intentioned people, as are sufficient to deter a prudent and considerate person from venturing to forsake “the old paths,” by adopting or inventing new and strange opinions. The word of God does not countenance that rage for novelty which is a marked characteristic of these times. In the history
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of four thousand years, only two changes in the religious system of the world are recorded. Both were predicted by prophecy, both were confirmed by miracle; and the former was expressly introductory of the second, which is as plainly declared to be final.

Instead, therefore, of there being any real reproach in the terms "obsolete," "antiquated," and "musty," which I have seen applied to the doctrines and constitutions of our Church by some of her enemies, who possess more zeal than elegance or argument, she claims a superior share of consideration on the very ground of her being a *faithful repository* of *old* doctrines, and of having fashioned her constitution to as close a resemblance of primitive rules as the present habits of the world will admit. For, though scriptural knowledge is most eminently requisite, it should not be the *only* qualification of
of

of those who undertake the arduous office of uniting a mixed multitude in one associated congregation, for the purpose of Christian worship and edification. How eminently our reformers were distinguished by these essential ingredients, knowledge of the human heart, and political wisdom, need not be stated to any who are in the least versed in the history of those times. They had indeed two peculiar advantages; they were assisted in their efforts by the civil power, and they were warned by the previous miscarriages of several reformers on the continent, who, conceiving zeal to be the one thing needful in the great work that they had undertaken, discarded expediency; and, being heated by persecution and opposition, fancied that pulling down an old fabric was similar to erecting a new one. Forgetting that all human societies must be accommodated to the imperfections and necessities

necessities of the fallible beings of whom they are composed ; in their attempt to fabricate a religious establishment on the basis of ideal perfection, and uncomplying austere simplicity, they opened a door for the grossest enthusiasm and wildest misrule. Their notions of Christian liberty led them to exclude the authority of the civil magistrate ; and thus they rushed into the enormities of open rebellion. They extended their ideas of the obligation of charity to that communion of goods, which, except in times that are guided by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit, must produce idleness, extravagance, and extreme poverty. They construed the prohibition of swearing so literally, as to refuse taking an oath in a court of justice, which has been considered by the wisest law-givers as the surest guard of the life and property of ourselves and others. They denied the lawfulness even
of

of defensive war; and thus, by laying themselves open to the assaults of every enemy, virtually surrendered to aliens that liberty which they so scrupulously guarded from the regulations that their lawful rulers sought to impose; and by an erroneous and strained interpretation of the sixth commandment, they declared against the legality of capital punishment, even for the most atrocious crimes. Our last three articles, which oppose the notions of these would-be perfectionists, are dictated by the most sound knowledge of scripture, combined with the justest ideas of civil government.

A prescribed form of liturgical service; a fixed compendium of doctrine, to which every officiating minister must subscribe, and promise to teach nothing contrary to the contents thereof; and a ministry independent of the congregation to whom they are to impart the saving truths of the gospel,

gospel ; which ministry, rising in rank and fortune in degrees nearly similar to the gradations of civil society, is governed by laws not wholly dependent upon, but yet amenable to, the legal magistrate ; must have powerful recommendations to the favour of all who do not, in their rage for christian liberty, overlook the duties of christian submission and humility. But, beside private benefit, there is one great public consideration, which I must beg to repeat. While the nation is faithful in its allegiance to its ecclesiastical institutions, it is “ not blown about by every “ wind of doctrine.” Not to mention less numerous or more equivocal seceders, we maintain (as I hope I have proved) a happy medium between two extremes of opinion, that are contradictory to the general tenor of scripture, and highly prejudicial to moral and christian improvement.

I must

I must here admit, that all our sectaries (except the Socinians, who make reason paramount to revelation, and resolve to discard what they cannot fully explain) plead Scripture as the ground of their opinions; and this leads me to consider the mischiefs that have arisen from private interpretation of difficult passages of holy writ by illiterate and enthusiastic, and sometimes by learned, but uncandid and obstinate people. Has not the Reformation, it is asked, restored the scriptures to the common people; and does not our church authorize, nay enjoin, all her members to *study* them? Most unquestionably, so far as moral improvement, or the fundamental rules of faith, are concerned. I believe too, that every Englishman has a right, and is required, to study the laws of his country; and I think it the duty of all to know so much of them, as to avoid infringing them. But
I do

I do not conceive that every understanding is capable of discerning the exact bounds of regal prerogative, of comprehending the law and usage of parliament, and the origin and foundation of our civil and political rights. Few people have leisure to study the statutes at large ; and though you and I ought to know enough to be good subjects, it would be advisable in us both, in case of a lawsuit, to be directed by the advice of an able solicitor. We may have some little notion of the physical organization of our bodies, and may even dabble so far in medicine as to prepare a few compounds, and administer them in trifling indispositions ; but in case of a serious illness, we should think it madness not to call in superior judgement. And shall we controvert those religious principles which are established by laborious investigation and profound learning, with the knowledge derived from slight investigation.

investigation and superficial research? I will not ask *you*, whether we shall resign our national creed transmitted to us from apostolical times, and adopt the fancies of illuminated cobblers, brain-sick weavers, or philosophistical half-educated sceptics, whom we should ridicule for coxcombs if they presumed to give an opinion respecting the temperature of our pulse or the management of our fortune, and yet are willingly submitted to, as expounders of the oracles of God? This question is to *you* happily inappropriate; but it is really necessary to many, who, but for this ridiculous mixture of pride and servility, this strange prostration of the liberty of which they are so tenacious, to the quackery that they would despise in the common affairs of life, might pass for intelligent people.

The history of the Reformation affords us so many instances of the evils which
arise

arise from misinterpreted texts of scripture, and promiscuous preaching *, that we cannot be too grateful for living under an establishment which limits and discounts these dangerous licences. To understand God's word aright, I mean so to comprehend it as truly to expound its difficulties, a knowledge of the original language is absolutely necessary. To this should be added, a thorough acquaintance with the customs and history of the nation of which it treats ; for, without this, the allusions that oriental writers abound in cannot be understood. Other requisites might be mentioned : but I mean chiefly to dwell upon one. The interpreter ought to have a clear comprehension of the general design and plan of *the whole scripture*.—

* It is most certain that Luther, in the heat of his opposition to Rome, asserted the right of private judgement in religion, in an indefinite way, of which he afterwards repented.

Such

Such an enlarged idea is required from every commentator on an antient classic; and certainly, as the New and Old Testament, though disjoined into parts, are connected as a whole, we cannot here be satisfied with the omission of what is deemed indispensable in other interpreters.

A text taken without its context, or without reference to the main design of the speaker or actor, may be brought to recommend falsehood, heresy, blasphemy, or any other "damned error." I promised to give some explanatory instances of such misapplications; and we will cast a cursory glance over the first chapters of St. John's Gospel. Did we look no further than Nathaniel's reply to Philip, chapter 1st, verse 46th, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" we should determine that this inquirer, instead of following, *rejected* the Messiah, and

and that he was an example of prejudice, instead of singleness of heart. The next verse contains the highest eulogium on this man's character, pronounced by the voice of Omniscience ; the context shews that he became an *immediate* disciple and follower of our Lord ; and he is generally supposed to have been the same as St. Bartholomew, and one of the chosen twelve. Does not this remark apply to those who, from some expressions occasionally used by our Saviour with reference to his humanity, overlook or deny the force of those passages in which, in his divine nature, he claims to be equal with God ?

At the 4th verse of the 2d chapter of St. John, we have what many have called a harsh answer from the blessed Jesus to a friendly intimation of his mother's ; which might be blasphemously explained, as if that rude independent deportment to
 parents,

parents, which is so marked a feature in these times, was sanctioned by the conduct of this our perfect Exemplar. That the words were not intended to convey an abrupt refusal, is evident, by our Lord's immediate compliance with her wishes. We must conclude, therefore, that they were either proverbial, or alluded to a particular idiom which in this remote time and nation we cannot fully understand. But to clear our Lord's character from this aspersions, we must look further. The 51st verse of the 2d of Luke, and the 26th and 27th of the 19th chapter of St. John, prove, that they who seek to justify filial impertinence, or disrespect, by the above passage, *contradict* instead of *explaining* Scripture, and mistake the character of him who, though Lord of all, was eminently distinguished by his dutiful conduct to the source of his mortal being.

I have

I have heard the discourse of our Lord with the woman of Samaria so explained (and that from the pulpit of instruction), as to represent it to be immaterial where and how, that is to say, in what place and with what forms, God is worshipped. The words thus misapplied were, “The hour
 “ cometh, and now is, when the true
 “ worshippers shall worship the Father in
 “ spirit and in truth ; for the Father seek-
 “ eth such to worship him.” Was the preceding verse *intentionally* or *accidentally* overlooked ? John, 4th and 22d verse, “Ye worship,” says our Lord to the schismatical Samaritans, “ye know not what ;
 “ but we know what we worship, for *salva-*
 “ *tion is of the Jews.*” It will be difficult to find a plainer testimony in favour of a faith founded on divine revelation, or of an authorized ecclesiastical establishment.

I will give but one more express instance of the possibility (or rather the probability)

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of such misinterpretation of Scripture by *unskilful* or *dishonest* hands. It is the behaviour of our Lord to the woman taken in adultery, which is recorded in the 8th chapter of this gospel. When she tells him that no man had condemned her, he replies, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." What! did not our Lord condemn this heinous crime? how, then, could he say he came to—"fulfil the law and the prophets," which with one voice condemn and reprobate this gross violation of personal purity and solemn obligation? It may be answered, that the words are plain, level to every understanding; and that the fact corresponded, for the woman was *dismissed*. Sinning no more, therefore, cancels the preceding offence; and thus the bands of wickedness may be loosed, and German morality founded upon a literal construction of our Lord's words.

But

But we must not rest in such partial examinations of Scripture. We must look at the history of Jesus, and at the designs of his enemies. The Scribes and Pharisees who brought this offender to our Lord, were desirous of ensnaring him by some action which they might construe into an exercise of regal or magisterial power, and thus find a pretence of accusing him to the Romans as an infringer of the authority of Cæsar. Their laws (observe, they were also the laws of God) condemned the adulterers to death; and they insidiously brought this acknowledged culprit to Christ, in the hope that if he merely ratified the justice of the sentence which Moses had pronounced, they might so pervert his words as to turn them into *constructive* rebellion. This incident, therefore, is recorded as an instance of the *extraordinary wisdom* with which our Saviour frustrated the intrigues of an in-

famous cabal who sought his destruction; and cannot, without misapplication, be adduced for any moral purpose, except to check that censorious spirit which is eager to punish others, while unrepented transgressions rankle in their own bosoms. It is not as the omniscient Judge of man, but as one who was expected to act as the temporal ruler of Israel, that he refuses to condemn the guilty creature who stood trembling before him. As a teacher of pure morals, he dismisses her with an exhortation to sin no more; which, if her heart was not entirely hardened, would be the means of obtaining forgiveness for her at the tribunal of Heaven. A reference to the 27th and 28th verses of the sixth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, will shew you the rule of inward purity by which Christians must regulate even the secret affections of their hearts. The Redeemer of the world was no inconsistent teacher;

teacher ; he had no alternately loose and rigid morality, no convenient doctrines suited to times and seasons, no palliatives to screen the mighty, no stimulants to goad the unprotected ; no popular morality for the mob, no specious disquisitions for the learned. They who attribute such incongruity to him, look at a part, not at the whole. It is from such partial and confined views of Scripture that dissensions and heresies arise. The Calvinists build their notions on a mistaken conception of St. Paul's design in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, wherein the words election and rejection are mentioned ; but certainly in general terms*, and with application to the calling of the Gentiles to occupy that place in the Church of God which the Jews forfeited by not acknowledging the Messiah. Yet that this great

* Commentators have agreed that no instance of individual election appears in Scripture.

body of unbelieving Israel would not be finally reprobate, or shut out from the Christian covenant, the eleventh chapter of Romans, and many prophetic parts of Scripture, unequivocally declare; and its whole tenor pronounces universal redemption. Equally confined are the views of those who, denying the divinity of our Lord, adduce those expressions in the gospels to confirm their notions, in which he acknowledges inferiority to the Father, which in respect to his human nature is *unquestionably* true. Considered in this view, their favourite reference to the Sent and the Sender, and even the text of "My Father is greater than I," are easily reconcilable to orthodox opinions. But as a learned Prelate* observes, "the texts that affirm the divinity of Christ are

* This remark is taken from the Bishop of Lincoln's Elements of Theology; but not having the work to refer to, the page cannot be specified.

" too

“ too plain, and too positive, to bend to
 “ their expositions ; they must therefore
 “ erase them, or receive the doctrines
 “ they contain.” Contrary to all evidence or probability, they prefer the latter.

To guard against these and many other evils, I strongly recommend to my sex an *early* and *thorough* intimacy with their bibles. I wish them to be so versed and grounded in scriptural knowledge, that they may comprehend the whole series of history and prophecy, as well as the moral instruction which the sacred volume contains. Such blessed advantage over the present age was possessed by our ancestors at the time of the Reformation. Thus did the primitive Christians digest and understand the *whole* word of God ; and at both these periods, it was this thorough conviction of the truth and purport of holy writ, which supported timid beauty

and feeble childhood through the torments of martyrdom with more than manly courage. We are not called to mount the blazing pile, nor to step into the bloody amphitheatre, for the love of Christ. Blessed be his name that we are not ! for could we be expected to die for him of whom we have scarcely heard ? But we are called to endure that trial, of mocking and scoffing, to which the doctrine (now, as once the person) of our Saviour is exposed. It is a most perverse and wicked wit, which can attempt to debase the charter of salvation by profane or ludicrous allusions. In this country, the New Testament at present is seldom openly travestied ; but some unguarded expressions used by a popular divine, only intended to assert that, from the clearness of its internal and historical evidence, the *gospel* of Christ may rest on its own support, without recurring to the Old Testament for proofs, seem to have

have been hailed as an auspicious signal by "filthy talkers and jesters," proclaiming that the first covenant may be lawfully turned into ridicule. Can a public corrector of taste and morals be justified for describing, as an "exquisite addition" to a poem, "a droll transformation of the story of Nebuchadnezzar and his fiery furnace, with the three Hebrew salmanders who could not be burnt;" owning, "that for this burlesque exhibition of his Majesty of Babylon they owe to the playful poet a hearty laugh?" Was the editor of this critique aware, that the book in which this affecting narrative is contained was authenticated by two express quotations of our Lord*; in one of which he acknowledges Daniel's prophetical character? Does a jocular parody of a solemn and instructive event, recorded by one whose prescience is divinely

* See Matthew, 13th chapter 43d verse, 24th chapter 15th verse.

attested, become him who, as a Christian, must defend the verity of all our Lord's assertions* ?

* The following anecdote is given on newspaper testimony, with a wish that it may have had no foundation in truth ; for it will then act as a caution, instead of a censure : A New Jerusalem teacher surreptitiously obtained an appointment to a meeting belonging to some regular dissenters. A trial at law ensued ; and the preacher, who had been an itinerant music-master and petty shopkeeper, was defended by his very elaborate counsel, who is said to have introduced David's skill upon the harp, and the humble professions of the apostles, as a parallel that was applicable to this schismatic's change of occupation. Did this learned gentleman not know, or did he purposely forget, that these apostles were miraculously endowed by the Spirit of God with all knowledge, all faith, and the power of curing all diseases ? What resemblance then can possibly exist between these supernaturally instructed teachers, and an ignorant and (as was clearly proved) knavish mechanic ? Surely the wit of this absurd comparison is too strained to pass, even in a careless auditory, as an excuse for its falsehood and irreverence.

A thorough

A thorough acquaintance with holy writ will inspire such habitual reverence for it, as a whole, as must prevent us from encouraging those degrading parodies of any detached part of it, which some voluble unprincipled rhymers brought into fashion, whose works are now happily sinking into the oblivion which they deserve; I hope, never more to be revived or imitated. In the writings of a certain florid genius, whose richly dressed poetry for some time directed the nation (I will not call it taste), there are several allusions to the narratives of holy writ, which, though seriously worded, are degraded by being applied to petty similes. Since we are assured in the New Testament, that "all Scripture" (by which the Jewish Scriptures only could be meant) "is given by inspiration;" since the two most extraordinary, and, it should seem to us, improbable occurrences which they

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contain,

contain, the histories of Jonah and Balaam, are confirmed, the former by five comparisons in the discourses of our Lord, the latter by the inferences of St. Peter and St. Jude; “droll transformations of narratives,” or even light allusions to biblical histories, must be considered not only as criminal in those who thus abuse their talents, but as arguing great ignorance of the foundation of their religion, and its connexion with Jewish history, in every admirer of these perverted efforts of wit and ingenuity.

The study that I so earnestly recommend will, if assisted by the invaluable labours of sound and able expositors, enable you to repel many oblique attacks which may be made upon your faith, on account of the seeming incongruity of particular incidents. The miracles of our Lord have not escaped the petulant criticism of short-sighted cavillers. They
are

are said to have been limited and puerile ; and certainly they were upon a less grand and awful scale than the impressive wonders which freed the Hebrew captives from Egyptian bondage, and prepared them for the reception of the Mosaical covenant. Our Lord came to a people who were in expectation of a wonderful personage ; to a nation by whom it was pre-ordained that he was to be rejected and sacrificed ; yet among whom he was to meet with many converts, and from whose narrow region his gospel was to burst like a resistless torrent, and overflow the world. The power of working miracles, which was in the first instance confined to the Jewish Lawgiver and High Priest, was in the latter, with great propriety, extended to every ambassador who bore this high mission to any part of the world. As in the Asiatic and Grecian cities, so on the barren rock of Melita, and in the remote confines of imperial

imperial Rome, St. Paul displayed the unequivocal attestations of accompanying Deity. Ecclesiastical history assures us, that the like effects attended the yet more distant journies of the other apostles.

In *number* therefore, though not in *individual importance*, the miracles which ushered in the gospel exceeded the supernatural evidences of the law. They were also strictly applicable to the different natures of the two dispensations. For recalling the world to the almost extinguished knowledge of one God, terror and majesty were awfully combined. Benevolence was the characteristical feature of those mild wonders, which announced the purpose of the Almighty to be reconciled to his offending, but repentant creatures.

“ Thus, though the whole system of
 “ Christian miracles was intended to con-
 “ vince men that Jesus was sent by God,
 “ and not to confer extraordinary bene-
 “ fits

“ fits on particular persons; yet their in-
 “ cidental benevolence, this going about
 “ doing good, is a strong attestation of
 “ the divine origin of that miraculous
 “ power which Jesus Christ possessed*.”

May we not expect that this general enlarged attention to the whole design of Scripture will considerably abate the virulence of that religious animosity, which is most apt to arise from contracted views, and partial attachment to some few peculiar doctrines? We sometimes adopt erroneous opinions from pertinacity, or intentional singularity; but oftener through that infirmity of judgment which will not permit an ardent imagination to rest within the sober bounds of truth, or to confine itself to the prescribed limits of revelation; which, it must ever be remembered, is calculated to comfort the faithful, and to support the weak; not to

* This remark is taken from Hey's Lectures.

satisfy

satisfy "curious and carnal persons." Charity has received as much injury from extreme refinements and minute subtilties of expression, as mysterious doctrines have from diffuse explanations, or injudicious and unwarrantable applications. Thus people are often brought to differ in words, who agree in things; and to attach consequence to merely speculative distinctions, which they do not understand. Hence arose those miserable and unaccountable dissensions (which may be justly termed theological quibbling) that perplexed the school divines; hence the disputes between Friars of different orders, the quarrels of Jesuits and Jansenists, and the numerous altercations that have divided and subdivided all classes of dissenters from our establishment. But if, instead of thus inspecting a part of our religion with microscopic attention, of

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lifting up one text as our banner, and fighting under it against all our fellow-Christians, we applied ourselves to study the beauty and consistency of all the sacred volume, our zeal for peculiar tenets, and all that criminal desire of being singular which makes men hazard the welfare of their souls in vindication of supposed rights, would be absorbed by the anxious desire of truly obeying what we felt to be so excellent, and knew to be so divine. Then might we hope that the professors of the faith of Jesus would, as in early times, be marked by this flattering distinction, "Behold how these Christians love one another."

At the time when the impostor Mahomet promulgated his bloody and voluptuous doctrines, the eastern part of the Christian world was torne by miserable contention, and the western was wasted by war and depressed by ignorance. All
historians

historians concur in stating, that the hatred and animosity which Christians bore to each other expedited the triumphs of the cruel Arabian and his profelyting banditti. The schisms which then rent the church disposed many to become his converts ; to state what they were, is to give an awful lesson to these times : many then questioned the *divinity of our Saviour* ; and the doctrine of *absolute predestination* was inculcated with great zeal by the adherents of St. Augustine.

May we not now inquire, what are the signs of the times in which we live ? Within our church there is a schism, in which the old Pharisaical superciliousness, of “ stand apart, I am more holy than thou,” is too apparent. Beyond her pale, we see new modes of worship multiplied, and disunion engrafted on dissension. The church of Scotland, which was one of the first to reject prescription,
and

and to venture boldly in untried paths, terrified at the unwarrantable licence assumed by her refractory members*, is forced to resume the renounced restraint of ecclesiastical coercion. With us, the blessing of toleration has let in the curses of fanaticism, scepticism, and licentiousness. Hosts of ignorant self-sufficient preachers are yearly licenced to mislead the weak and irresolute, and to inspire the illiterate with contempt for their proper pastors. Among the higher ranks, the latitudinarian gains many converts to the attractive sound of liberality, and enlarged opinions; and from the latitudinarian the scale of error mounts to infidelity. But indifference is the more prevailing characteristic of this age; and it is so very prevalent among the higher circles, that seriousness and devotion are con-

* For this account of the state of the presbytery in Scotland, see Dr. Hill's Theological Institutes.

stantly

stantly confounded with sectarian enthusiasm. The duty of worshiping the God of our fathers is made to depend upon convenience, upon fashion, upon a warm chapel, or upon an agreeable preacher. From the lives of these nominal Christians, or from the repulsive manners of those who “ make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the hem of their garments,” the well-bred deist, and mere moral man of the world, affect to form their notion of the influence of religion upon the heart and mind. Alas ! that the many thousands, who in this island have “ never bowed the knee to Baal,” nor omitted that “ worship in spirit and truth” which our Creator prescribes, would sometimes emerge from their beloved retirement, and shew an admiring world, “ Virtue in her own shape how lovely.”

It must however be acknowledged, that the lives of too many sincere Christians will

will not bear a comparison with the pure and holy rules which they profess to receive as the guide of their conduct; and I am informed, that our present race of deists justify their rejection of religion by saying, “ Why do not you believers lead
 “ better lives ? I entertain no such hopes
 “ respecting futurity as you do ; I reject
 “ your creed ; I disavow the divine assist-
 “ ances which you pretend to receive ;
 “ yet my moral rectitude challenges a
 “ comparison with your’s. I acknow-
 “ ledge no laws that debar me from those
 “ gratifications which you solemnly re-
 “ nounce as sins, yet frequently practise.
 “ Allowing, therefore, the verity and re-
 “ ality of your religious obligations, my
 “ offences must receive a less severe con-
 “ demnation than your’s.”

The reply to this justificatory recrimination is so apparent, that, had I not been assured that such expressions are the com-
 mon

mon apology of deists, I should have thought it derogatory to their acuteness to attribute to them such mean and jejune subterfuges. Here a remark of our Saviour's must recur to your remembrance, and you will again feelingly acknowledge that he knew what was in man: "Men" still "love darkness better than light," and for the same reason as when Christ was upon earth, "because their deeds are evil." It is the purity and holiness of the gospel that makes the slaves of Mammon and Belial cavil at its authority. It is not because it rests on insufficient evidence, that they deny its divine origin; but because it will not accommodate itself to a darling vice, or a predominant passion, that they determine not to let it rule over them.

But whether we reject or acknowledge the government of the blessed Jesus in this world, we shall all stand at his judgment

ment seat hereafter. The pleas that will be admitted in behalf of those to whom the evangelical tidings of a Redeemer were never proclaimed, cannot be urged in favour of *Pagans by choice*, who, though born, baptized, and educated in a Christian country, preferred the darkness of Deism to the light which shone around them. Whoever lives where Christianity is professed, is by birth a subject of the Lamb of God. He may renounce his allegiance, he may insult and despise his Sovereign; but these frantic acts do not transform him into an alien, but a rebel. Born under the legislation of the gospel, it is against that dispensation that he sins, and it is by that he will be judged. His boasted liberty, of being free to choose his master, extends only to the grave. Even if his moral conduct were such as to suggest hopes of escaping future vengeance, the penalty will attach to his *principles.*

principles. The gaudy show of benevolence, integrity, or liberality, which proceeded not from the desire of pleasing God, and were not offered to him with the sweet smelling favour of faith in Christ, only constitute that defective righteousness which, we are assured, will not be accepted by God from those whom he has called to the knowledge of his Son.

It is certain, that the “infection of
“man’s nature *,” as our church terms it, remains in some degree in us all; so that, even in the most sincere Christians,
“there is a law of the flesh that is continually warring against the law of God.” The Church of England makes no pretensions either to aggregate or individual perfection. In conformity with the sacred code from which she derives her ordinances, she acknowledges her militant

* Article 9th.

state ; and, conscious that her members
 “ are beset with so many and great dan-
 “ gers, that by reason of the frailty of
 “ their mortal nature they cannot always
 “ stand upright, she implores such sup-
 “ plies of strength and protection as may
 “ carry them through all temptations *.”

The allusions to a Christian's life on earth are not taken from a state of triumph, security, or even repose: it is ever described as an arduous race, a painful conflict, a day of labour and sorrow, a struggle with the powers of darkness. We have Scripture and our maternal church on our side, when we suggest an opinion, that the spiritual enemy is more busily

* “ A good Christian, not being one who has no
 “ inclination to sin ; but one who, through the
 “ grace of God, immediately checks, and suffers
 “ not such inclinations to grow into evil habits.”—

See Bishop Wilson's short and plain instructions for the Lord's Supper, page 50.

employed in assailing the liege subjects of the King of Heaven, than in securing the condemnation of those who, by their anti-christian prejudices, have surrendered their minds to that infidelity which is the parent of every vice. These the prince of darkness can leave to work out their own destruction; but he must penetrate into the retirements of piety, and endeavour to disturb the prayers, corrode the temper, or seduce the integrity, of those who he fears are becoming “meet for the inheritance of the Saints in Light.”

But beside those who, though not exempt from human error, yet on the whole appear to “walk” worthy of the vocation whereunto they are called, there are many who, with sincere intentions of keeping the fear of God always before their eyes; do occasionally fall into great and aggravated sins. Offenders of this description furnish the infidel with much
seeming

seeming occasion for exultation ; but the triumph is merely visionary. When we search into the history of these unhappy culprits, we shall find many natural reasons for their infirmities ; either they have strong passions, or defective tempers ; perhaps their education has been injudicious, or their relative situation in life is attended with some peculiarly irritating or dangerous circumstances. The sceptic's prejudice against religion leads him to consider it as the *cause* of those errors which it is constantly endeavouring to *counteract*. I must exclude from the pale of true Christianity, (that is, from the number of sincere servants of the blessed Jesus) all who live in the habitual practice of what they know to be vice ; but they who divide their time between sinning and sorrowing, who promise with the impassioned and confident Peter, and like him offend and weep, exhibit, though

not so glorious, yet as strong a proof of the power of religion on a weak but sincere mind, as the dying Stephen did when he prayed to his Lord in glory, amid his mortal agonies. Though the certainty of another world has not eradicated the bosom infirmity, it makes “the strong” “man tremble,” and compels the rebel inclinations to fall prostrate for pardon before the throne of Mercy; by whom, we trust, though they may be *corrected* as *offenders*, they will not be *sentenced* as *apostates*.

Deist, dost thou inquire what religion has done for those who continually transgress and reform? I answer, it is the powerful attraction which prevented them from flying off, as thou hast done, into the dark and cheerless regions of chaotic doubt and terror. What would these half-emancipated slaves of furious passions, irregular desires, and perverted inclina-
tions

tions have been, if they had also denied their God, and rejected the saving mercies of their Saviour? "He who knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust," will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss by those who maintain a constant struggle with an ill-regulated ill-tutored mind. Leave them to the mercy of the master they have chosen. But if, in the pride of moral rectitude, thou presumest to set thy specious goodness in opposition to the contrite Publican who weeps beside thee; beware, Sinner; thou too art weighed in the balance and art found wanting. Dost thou possess a native sweetness of disposition; this is the soil in which thou shouldst have planted the Christian grace of charity. Hast thou a keen perception of what is perfect, fair, and good; this talent was given thee to be improved into a "knowledge of the ways of the Most

men, and the secret aspirations of the soul of the penitent; for the world is not endued with omniscience, and can only determine by what it is permitted to see. But it is by thy inward motives, not by thy ostensible deeds, that thou shalt be sentenced at the awful tribunal of him, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who will fearfully reclaim the apostate who rejected his authority, in the closing scenes of his mediatorial kingdom, before it merges into the full dominion of paternal Deity*.

The prevalence of suicide is another instance by which we may judge of the state of religion in this kingdom; for unquestionably, unless it proceed from mental derangement, we must pronounce the self-murderer ignorant of the *obligations* and *power* of Christianity. If he really believed in God, would he dare to rush uncalled into his presence, or make the

* See 1st Corinthians 15th chap. 24th verse.

last action of his life a crime of which he never can repent? The prevalence of this offence among the Pagans of old times is indisputable ; it was even considered as somewhat of a brave and commendable action, by which their greatest and wisest men, and their most virtuous women, heroically resolved to escape from pain, disgrace, and sorrow. Equally indisputable is the fact, that the religion of Jesus conquered this daring propensity ; since its most eminent professors deemed it less infamous to expire in excruciating tortures as public criminals, than gently to languish away with the mock dignity of a Seneca, or to tear open their own bowels with the ruthless frenzy of a Cato. The revival of this humour of self-destruction in France is so notorious, that it is lamented even by those who still see, in that atheistical revolution,

tion, much to admire, and who fruitlessly wish to palliate all its enormities*.

Self-murder, when it is not a sudden act of madness or passion, must proceed from the sullen resolve of wounded pride, conscious of merit and impatient of disappointment. How opposite is this temper to the self-abasement, the lowly resignation of a Christian soul, who receives temporal calamities as the *deserved chastisements* of his Father and his God, and who hopes, through his mercy, not only the pardon of his sins, but the promises annexed to patient submission ! It is those who presume to think highly of their own deservings, who depend upon merit, who *demand* reward, and who limit their views of happiness to temporal possession on this side Jordan, that are most inclined, like

* It is affirmed, on an average calculation, that five Frenchmen perish in two days by their own hands. See Holcroft's Travels into France.

treacherous

treacherous centinels, to desert the post which they deem unworthy of their high deservings.

Suicide, therefore, is most frequently the stern determination of indignant deism, warring in its pride against the will of the Highest. It often too proceeds from the keen tortures of accusing conscience, or from a poignant sense of the embarrassments and anxieties to which a life of guilt generally exposes the offender. Divines have remarked, that as, in this life, the natural consequences of sin often continue to pursue the offender, in the shape of bodily pain or calamity, long after he has become sincerely penitent for his faults, the heathens had no chance of discovering, from what they saw of the Almighty's providential government of the world, that the eternal consequences of sin would ever be remitted. As Christians have brighter hopes on this import-

ant subject, penitence is now bound by stronger bonds to endure the temporal afflictions, which it is conscious of deserving, from the hope that its present resignation may cancel its former misdeeds, and, in the language of the apostle, that it “ may live to bring forth fruits meet “ for repentance.”

There are yet other reasons which bind the Christian even to a joyless and miserable existence. In a probationary state, the time of trial cannot be over till our Master bids “ us rest from our labours.” The dying flame, which seems expiring in the socket, may yet cast out a light sufficient to recall some wandering connexion from the broad road of destruction. Are we not in the hands of a merciful God, who wilheth not the eternal death of a sinner; and may we not hope, that if we patiently abide his summons, he will not remove us hence, but “ with all due “ advantage

“ advantage for eternity, when we shall
 “ be in a holy disposition of soul, in a
 “ perfect renunciation of the guise of this
 “ mad and sinful world * ?”

That the crime of self-destruction by actual violence has not yet made such progress amongst us, as it has done amongst our revolutionized and illuminized neighbours, affords great solace to the reflecting mind, anxious to discover some grounds for confiding in the protection of the Most High during our present arduous conflict. But the frequency of that self-destruction which is accomplished by dissipation and vice presents a less consolatory prospect. However, as this species of suicide does not assume such determined hostility to Heaven in its aspect, we may charitably hope that a death-bed is *sometimes* the scene of *true* repentance.

• See the admirable prayers in the service for Easter Eve, in Nelson's Companion to the Fasts and Festivals.

Possibly

Possibly I shall here be arraigned, for limiting that unbounded mercy and compassion of the Deity, which is such a favourite topic among our new expositors of the Christian religion. I acknowledge these qualities to be infinite; all the attributes of the Godhead are so; their only limits are those other attributes which we also know to be essential to his nature. Whenever we enter on the incomprehensible theme of Deity, whether our attention be turned to his attributes or his nature, we ought to advance with trembling steps; and, conscious of the awful difficulties by which we are furrounded, we should be alike careful of touching the mysterious palladium with irreverent hands, or defending it by injudicious means. Uzzah* must not officiously attempt to support the ark; a power unseen resides within, who will as surely repel the ob-

* See 2d of Samuel, 6th chapter, 7th verse.

trusive aid of ignorance and folly, as it will punish the wickedness of blasphemous impugners of the truth. In one instance, the inconceivable union of *perfect* justice and *perfect* compassion was levelled to the comprehension of man. In the sacrifice of Christ, the Almighty shewed his hatred to sin and his mercy to sinners. Let not the wicked man, therefore, go on in his wickedness, lest he should experience the terror of infinite justice, who would not be reconciled to an offending world without an expiatory offering of inestimable price ; and let not the contrite heart despair of being forgiven by Him, “ who so loved “ the world, that he gave his only son for “ us.” Even in the eleventh hour, if true repentance knock, the door of mercy will be opened ; but the *application* must be made. Religion now, as she did of yore*, crieth without and uttereth her

* Proverbs, 1st chapter, 20th verse.

voice in the streets. Infinite are her blessings ; but still they are only found of those who seek them. “ If we search
 “ for them as hidden treasures, then shall
 “ we understand the fear of the Lord,
 “ and find the knowledge of God.”

This knowledge differs so essentially from the worldly wisdom which men of intrigue, ambition, and business pursue, instead of the true riches ; and from the inquisitive speculative philosophy which sports upon the surface of the material world ; that we cannot wonder at a period, wherein a long continuance of temporal security and prosperity has engendered a dependance on second causes, an undue regard for this life, and an indifference to future prospects ; that the ordinances of religion, which are not recommended by their relation to political considerations, should sink into neglect ; especially if we (mighty disputants) cannot discern the
reason

reason of their institution, owing to their abstract and spiritual nature. To this must we ascribe the general difuse of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the dear remembrance of his meritorious death, and which is not only the memorial of a benefactor, but the appointed means of conveying his mercy to us, and of expressing our gratitude for the benefit. Of this duty it may be remarked, that the disciples were prepared to observe it by a prophetical admonition. A year preceding that memorable feast, which determined that the Christian should supersede the Jewish Paschal supper, our Lord, as we find by the sixth chapter of St. John's gospel, informed his auditors of the nature and sign of the future sacrament of the new covenant. The Jews, interpreting this communication as they did their own law, according to the letter and not the spirit, exclaimed with incredulous

dulous astonishment, "This is an hard saying. Can this man give us his flesh to eat?" And the sacred narrative proceeds to inform us, "that from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." So exactly do the inspired historians adhere to the truth of character. A mysterious ordinance, painfully appealing to the passions, repulsive of the pride of human nature, abstracted from every scheme of policy or worldly advantage, and requiring total resignation, and dependance upon God, to sanctify the means whereby he chooses to convey his promised graces to us, was likely to prove a stumbling block to those who looked to temporal prosperity as the end of religious worship. Our Lord did not *then* inform these gain-sayers by what sign, or visible medium, this living bread was to be represented. He properly reserved this discovery for the

the vigil of the sacrifice which it was to commemorate. The sacred rite was then solemnized, and the command given for its perpetual observance. The three evangelists who first published their gospels having recorded this *action* of their Master's, St. John, who wrote with a design of supplying their omissions, passes over the *history* of the institution, and enlarges on the *doctrinal* part. Nothing can be more authoritative and obligatory than the solemn declaration which our Saviour made to the amazed Synagogue at Capernaum ;

“ Verily verily I say unto you, except ye
 “ eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and
 “ drink his blood, ye have no life in you.
 “ Who so eateth my flesh, and drinketh
 “ my blood, hath eternal life, and I will
 “ raise him up at the last day. For my
 “ flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is
 “ drink indeed. As the living Father
 “ hath sent me, and I live by the Father ;
 “ so

“ so he that eateth me, even he shall live
 “ by me.” If we combine this explanation of the *benefits* of the sacrament, with the *narrative* of our Lord’s breaking the bread and blessing the wine, and delivering them to his apostles, commanding them to “ do so in remembrance of him,” we must discern the *positive* obligation which all Christians lie under to partake of this memorial of their redemption*. We know, from inspired testimony, that the primitive church was constant and frequent in the use of this outward visible sign of the inward spiritual grace; for there are many allusions to this holy rite in the Acts and the Epistles, besides directions for the orderly management of the eucharistical feast contained in the eleventh chapter of the first of Corinthians. How grace and pardon are conveyed to the

* See Bishop Cleaver’s Sermons on the Nature of the Sacrament.

souls of those communicants who, with sincere faith and devout minds, partake of this holy ordinance, remains among the secrets of the Most High. It was no more necessary that we should penetrate into this mystery, than that we should comprehend all God's part of the covenant of grace; but though the reasons on which his purposes are founded are hidden from curiosity, his determinations, and the promises annexed to his commands, are plainly disclosed, to excite faith and to stimulate obedience. The humble are instructed, the wise in their own conceit are left uninformed.

Is it true that our Lord has declared,
 " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of
 " Man, and drink his blood, ye have no
 " life in you?" Is it also an acknowledged
 fact, that immediately preceding the last
 scenes of his mortality he took bread and
 wine, blessed them, pronounced them his
 body

body and blood, and *commanded* his disciples to receive those consecrated elements in “remembrance of him?” How *dare* we then, knowing these things to be true, *omit* the rite, *disobey* the command, and *brave* the threatening? Alas! being united with the Saviour of the world in spiritual communion, is of far less consequence than being admitted into a fashionable circle, or ranked in a certain set. In spite of the general levity with which sacred things are treated, the eucharist still exacts somewhat of awful reverence, even from those who relish “droll transformations” of holy writ, and, under the seemingly modest plea of unworthiness, decline undertaking those duties of examination, confession, and serious exclusion, which they still think ought to precede this more immediate approach to the presence of God. But have we not positive assurance, that the sins and negligences

gences which unfit us for the Lord's table will effectually bar the everlasting doors of Heaven against us? The wedding garment, which we are required to put on for the sacrificial feast at the altar, is the same robe which we must wear in the New Jerusalem, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. And surely, every wilful omission of the enjoined memorial of "the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ," must add to the number of these excluding offences. For the case of the *negligent Christian*, whose attachment to worldly pleasure or business operates more powerfully on his mind than obedience to his Lord's commands, and that of the *deist, living in a Christian country*, are similar; they will be judged by the laws which they *knew*, but *refused* to obey.

That eagerness of inquiry, and laxity of performance, which is another sign of these

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That eagerness of inquiry, and laxity of performance, which is another sign of these

these times, is forcibly described in the sacred pages by the epithet of "having
 " itching ears, ever learning, and never
 " coming to the knowledge of the truth." Again let me press on the attention of every female into whose hands these pages may fall, to consider seriously how much this restless spirit of curiosity, this sceptical doubt, this dissatisfaction with the religious knowledge of past times, is inimical to the diffident and retired character which our sex should constantly preserve. From the partial rejection of doubt, the mind easily slides to the contumacy of disbelief. A female politician is the favourite theme of satire ; a female deist, if not so ridiculous, is more alarming and detestable. Devout dependance on a heavenly protector, is so congenial to the apprehensions of weakness, and the privations of submission, that to renounce religious hope appears to be a far more masculine

masculine action, than to take the command of an army. In all the peculiar sufferings to which our sex are exposed, notwithstanding all the mortifications, disappointments, and sorrows, which the predominant controul of man necessarily occasions us, our peculiar fitness to embrace the truths, and to obey the precepts of the gospel, gives us advantages that far exceed the boasted privileges of our temporal superiors. Let us not renounce our high hopes, through the specious allurements of the agents of the Prince of Darkness, who, in a new form, again invite the inquisitive daughters of Eve to pluck the forbidden fruit of knowledge. Infidelity possesses no real advantage over faith; it can only “know in part;” there are mysteries in nature which will elude penetration as long as this world endures; and if we reject the mysteries of grace because we cannot *lower* them to our finite comprehension,

prehension, we only start new difficulties, and discover the insignificance of our boasted penetration.

I have little hope, that my humble lubrications will influence the judgment of those whose situation enables them to promote the best human means of preserving true religion among us : I mean the maintenance of our national church ; which may be justly entitled a hiding-place from the tempests of false and contrarious doctrines, as well as the firm ally and moral sanctioner of our civil rights. I know, that coercive laws, and severe restrictions, are generally found to defeat the purposes for which they are framed ; and my wishes extend no further, than that our rulers and legislators would, in their *private* conduct, as well as in their *public* station, evince their sincere reverence for that spiritual parent into whose arms they were received at baptism, and also uniformly consult her
welfare,

welfare, and recommended her doctrines. Taking Scripture for her guide, and acknowledging God as the foundation of all civil authority, she represses the ebullitions of violence and faction ; yet, as she annexes no infallibility either to her spiritual or temporal rulers, she not only prays for them, but admonishes them of their high responsibility, and inculcates no tenets that are inimical to the temperate exercise of Christian liberty. Her explanations of those mysterious doctrines which are necessary to be believed, are couched in reverent and modest terms* ; and in her anathemas against unbelievers, she pro-

* I believe the beginning of our first article has never been objected to : it is wonderfully sublime and impressive. Yet the understanding that can form clear conceptions of a Being without body, parts, or passions (as God certainly must be), must possess such an acuteness and profundity of intellect, as will prevent it from finding the latter part of this article *incomprehensible*.

ceeds no further than scripture authorizes*. On doubtful, obscure, and complicated opinions, she delivers her judgement in such a manner, as might rather tend to reconcile than widen the differences between Christians. She expresses a just sense of the merits of the Redeemer, and the necessity of divine revelation, without opening the door of communion to Antinomian licentiousness and sceptical morality, or barring the gates of Heaven on those to whom the glad tidings of salvation have never been made known; and after having declared her confidence in the promises of God, she cautions her members against curious nicety of inquiry on points which are rather speculative and dangerous, than practicable and profitable †.

* See Dr. Hey on the Athanasian creed; which is considered as the most objectionable part of our liturgy.

† See articles 11th and 17th.

The

The ceremonies instituted by the church of England are few and impressive ; connected on the one hand with the apostolical command, “ that all things should be “ done decently and in order ;” and on the other, with the imperfections and wants of those fallible creatures of which every assembly of militant Christians must be composed. Our liturgical services afford the most sublime *uninspired* examples of devotion in all its various branches, of humiliation, adoration, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition, that any national ritual can present. The litany, both in its deprecatory and supplicatory clauses, breathes in an extraordinary degree the spirit of glory to God and good will to man*. As our entrance into life is marked with

* To those who object to the frequent repetitions which occur in our liturgy, we can plead, not merely primitive and apostolical, but also divine example.

with a religious ceremony of *divine* appointment, our church has judiciously prepared a most pathetic service to distinguish our return to our parent earth with decent solemnity. It seems impossible for man to compose a form of words, in which plaintive condolence is more happily blended with religious consolation, or which more strictly corresponds with the idea of not sorrowing as men without hope. The concluding prayers, in which the minister blesses God for taking "the deceased out of the miseries of this sinful world," and entreats him to raise the

Our blessed Lord, on the same night that he was betrayed, thrice retired to present his sorrowful petitions to his Heavenly Father, using the same words (Matt. 25th chapter, 44th verse.) And surely our frail nature, and vain wandering imaginations, must perceive the advantage of having more than one opportunity of addressing our great Creator, especially in those comprehensive words which have been consecrated by the injunctions of the Son of God.

witnesses

witnesses of this sad scene from “ the
 “ death of sin to the life of righteousness,
 “ that when they depart this life they
 “ may all rest in him, as they hope the
 “ spirit of him whose mortal remains they
 “ have deposited in the earth doth,” ex-
 press a triumph of pious confidence over
 human anguish, which I trust seldom fails
 to convey a more than momentary conso-
 lation to the agonized bosom of bereaved
 affection ; while the dejected eye is raised
 from the grave at the exhilarating sound,
 and pursues the holy consolation to the
 Heaven from which it descended. Thus
 is that common event, which happens to
 us all, improved, by our Church, into an
 opportunity of distributing the most ad-
 mirable instruction to her members, who,
 either as spectators or mourners, are fre-
 quently called to behold the last scene of
 the ruined exuviae of *immortal* man. It is
 to be lamented, that this pious design is
 N 4 often

often counteracted by the *cumbrous* pomp and *unseasonable* parade which ostentatious wealth annexes to this ceremony, and thus converts the most impressive lesson into “a gaze for fools.” When the minister of God receives the plain and simple, but decent procession, at the bounds of the consecrated precincts, how does the unaffected tendernefs of real affection, filling up the pauses of the solemn service with the half-smothered bursts of heartfelt sorrow, exceed the trappings of pompous magnificence, with its numerous retinue of venal mourners, who feel no other interest in the corpse that they attend, than that the show should be very great, and the expence very enormous ! Allow me here to introduce the modest funeral, which even respectable affluence would do wisely to prefer, as described by fraternal love dictating to the pen of genius :

“ I see

" I see the hearse,
 " With sable plumes and sullen footed steeds,
 " The village church approach. I see the corse,
 " From its dark cell releas'd by many a hand,
 " Uplifted heavily. I hear the bell
 " Toll to the dull and melancholy sound
 " Of mute procession; the white priest before,
 " The mourners following; and in the midst
 " Thee my delight, my treasure, and my hope,
 " Borne through the portals of thy native church;
 " Thence never to return. I hear a voice
 " Consign thee to oblivion; dust to dust,
 " Ashes to ashes."

TEARS OF AFFECTION, by HURDIS.

A similar regard to our relative situations in life has determined our church, in her selection of offices appropriate to momentous changes in our connexions, to the ignorance of childhood, the precipitancy of adolescence, and the apprehensions of sickness. Marriage is not, with us, merely a civil contract, as was the case with the republican Calvinists during the Cromwellian usurpation; nor is it

N 5

elevated

elevated into a Sacrament, as the church of Rome still considers it. It is sanctioned by a religious ceremony, at once instructive and supplicatory, to strengthen the obligations that affection contracts; and the vows, which death or *enormous* guilt alone can *dissolve*, are *pledged in the presence of God*. A brief compendium of the conditions of the Christian covenant with respect to faith and morals, together with an explanation of the advantages and duty of prayer, and the nature and design of the initiatory and commemorative sacraments, is commanded to be taught to the young members of our church, as soon as they are able to “learn what a solemn vow, promise, and profession, they made at their baptism to God.” It would be well for our civil, and also for our ecclesiastical Sion, if all who have the care of children would most *scrupulously* attend to this positive duty, by giving their

their charge not merely a *verbal*, but a *practical* and intelligent acquaintance with that excellent composition the church catechism. The answer to the question respecting our duties to our neighbours, would, if deeply engraven on the heart of the learner, be found a sure preservative from the errors of the times. Even in nursery compositions, children are now taught to decide on the functions and obligations of situations which it is not only improbable, but impossible, they should ever fill. The evil spirit of insubordination, thus early acquired, accompanies the pupils in their progress through life. The subject first studies the duties of a king; the scholar learns what his teacher ought to be; the flock are taught to scrutinize the defects of their pastor; the servant proclaims his master's improprieties; the inferior sees every aggravation of his superior's faults; and yet, at the last day,

we shall only be questioned, whether we ourselves have done “our duty in that “state of life to which it pleased God to “call us.” *Our* crimes as subjects, scholars, servants, or inferiors, will be proclaimed before men and angels. Our cruel oppressors, or negligent instructors, will answer for their *own* offences.

When the seeds of morality, and the words of sound doctrine, are thus incorporated with the first impressions of memory and dawnings of reflection, we must watch them while they ripen into perfect holiness. Supposing we could not plead apostolical* or primitive practice in favour of the rite of confirmation, what better or more probable means could we use, to implore the strengthening and directing grace of God, than to lead the catechumens to the altar, and there to

* See Hebrews, 6th chapter, 2d verse.—“Laying “on of hands” is frequently mentioned in other parts of Scripture.

require

require of them a solemn avowal of their religious obligation ; concluding the service with episcopal benediction, and benevolent intercession, that the “ ever-
 “ lasting God would for ever extend his
 “ fatherly hand over these (self-devoted)
 “ servants ; that his holy spirit would so
 “ lead them in the knowledge and obedi-
 “ ence of his word, that in the end they
 “ might attain eternal life ?” . Such a service our Church has provided ; and both for its venerable antiquity, and excellent intention, it deserves far better than the ridicule and contempt which it too generally experiences from inveterate enemies or thoughtless neutrals. The Romanists erroneously rank confirmation among their sacraments ; we do not presume to say that “ it was given and or-
 “ dained by Christ himself.”

The peculiar trials of our sex have not escaped the benevolent attention of the compilers

compilers of our liturgical services. Beside the petition in the litany for those undergoing the pains of parturition, an office is prepared to re-welcome the joyful mother to the congregation, in which the Levitical oblation and sin-offering of a lamb, and a young pigeon, is exchanged for the christian sacrifice of praise and intercession. In this service, the pious intentions of former times are preserved, and the superstitious idolatrous pomp which the Church of Rome interpolated is wisely rejected.

With equal wisdom of discrimination, the wants and sorrows of sickness are supplied with a spiritual comforter. Intercession, exhortation, and examination, precede confession of sins; and in case of the humble and hearty desire of the sick person, the officiating priest is permitted to use a more authoritative form of absolution, than our church prescribes in her other

other services. Still, however, this form is considered as merely declaratory and conditional, ascribing no efficacious power to the ministering instrument, save what our Lord bequeathed to his church in St. John's gospel, 20th chapter, 23d verse. This absolution, therefore, depends as much upon the *faith* and *contrition* of the penitent, as those that are couched in the *petitionary* form, which our church probably changed upon this occasion, to comfort the feeble-minded in the hour of extreme distress. The prayers that follow this absolution, rank among the most pathetic and impressive compositions of human sympathy, yearning over the severest trials of mortal man. As at such a period the most solemn rite of religion should never be omitted, a short communion service, suited to the occasion, has been provided; but the ceremony of extreme unction, which the Romish Church engrafted

engrafted on the practice of the primitive Christians, has been properly discarded. We learn from St. James, that while miraculous powers were vested in the disciples of Jesus, the elders of the church were accustomed, at the request of diseased persons, not only to pray over them, and assist their spiritual necessities, but also to "anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith would save the sick, and the Lord would raise him up; and if he had committed sins they should be forgiven." The continuance of this unction, after the supernatural endowments from which it originated had been resumed, is one proof, among many, of the restless avidity with which the Romish hierarchy exercised domination over the consciences of men; since they could not pretend to work bodily cures, they extended the supposed efficacy of their ministry to a world

world from which no *tell-tale* traveller could return to complain of *imposition*; and they have had the audacity to give a source of emolument and aggrandisement the name of a sacrament; that is to say, of “the outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace ordained by Christ himself;” none of which essential distinctions are to be found in the Romanists anointing a dying person with oil, as an assurance of forgiveness of sins.

The offices for the ordination of priests and deacons, and for the consecration of Bishops and Archbishops, form a most sublime and instructive part of our ritual. It seems perfectly consistent with every preconceived idea of decency and order, that the ministers who are destined to wait upon the altar should be prepared by education, distinguished by habits, separated from the common mass of society by a particular provision, which excludes the necessity

necessity of their application to any ordinary calling ; and also that they should be *dedicated* to God by express and solemn appropriation. The Old Testament sanctions all these suggestions, by the rules therein laid down for the instruction, attire, endowment, and consecration of the Levitical Priesthood. The solemnity which substituted the faithful apostle Matthias in lieu of the traitor Judas, is recorded in the first chapter of the Acts. From many other passages of that most instructive treatise we may gather, that an express designation, or setting apart, preceded the assumption of ministerial powers ; and from various parts of the epistles we discover, that the custom of imparting the office of Deacon, Priest, or Bishop, by the imposition of hands, was continued as long as we possess any inspired record of the practice of the primitive church. It is true, in those days the extraordinary
 gifts

gifts of the Spirit of God precluded the necessity of human learning; and the liberality and zeal of the early converts supplied the want of a pecuniary provision for those who watched over them in the Lord; for a fixed maintenance could not be completely and regularly provided for the Clergy, till the predicted time so rapturously anticipated by prophecy, when "Kings and Queens were to become the nursing fathers and mothers of the Church of God." The comfort and reciprocal benefit of an *independent* ministry, who may speak the word of God with all boldness, has been discussed. The utility and importance of human learning for expounding the truths, and clearing the difficulties of Scripture, is too obvious to be disputed by any but fanatics, distempered by the inflated deceptions of spiritual pride; and surely the decent regularity of a prescribed form, destined to impress the mind of him who

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separated from the common
 mankind, must be apparent to all
 who are to be able to consider previously
 the promise to perform, and to join
 the purpose of supplication in the
 petitions that are to be offered; which
 cannot be the case, unless *fore-knowledge*
precedes utterance. Here again we are
 called upon to remark the moderation of
 our mother church, while steering her
 course between two opposite errors: alike
 avoiding the slovenly negligence which
 discerns no difference between sacred and
 profane functions, and the idolatrous
 priestcraft of Popery, who, as she exalts
 her ministers into infallible teachers of
 truth and workers of miracles, consist-
 ently with her own doctrines, numbers
 the ceremony of their consecration among
 her sacraments. General readers may de-
 rive much useful information, respecting
 the degrees and authority of the Christian
 Priesthood, from Nelson on the Ember

Fasts.

Every member of the Church should do well to fortify his mind against the errors of the times, by acquiring a competent knowledge of his relative duties as a member of that society of which Christ is the head. The tenets now too generally scouted, under the opprobrious term of high-church doctrines, would be found safe preservatives from that predicted "gain saying of Korah," which has so long disturbed the peace of the Christian world.

We have now briefly reviewed the offices of our Church, except five services for particular days. To the first day of Lent a solemn form of humiliation is appointed, preceded by denunciations of God's vengeance against impenitent sinners; repeated verbatim from scripture, and introduced by an explanation of the design of the ceremony; namely, "that the congregation, being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners,

ners,

is thus awfully separated from the loved to ear-
 masts of mankind, who wish to be able to name this ser-
 what they promise, named cursing
 with intense prayer, the chapter of Deutero-
 petitions though since this part of the ser-
 cannot be as justly deserves such a
 precedence which, on the same forced and
 caller's pretence, might induce us to
 our over all moral prohibitions of the
 New Testament, lest some individual of-
 fender should rush to our minds, when we
 read over the black catalogue of crimes
 which St. Paul assures us will prevent our
 inheriting the kingdom of God.

Three great national events are made
 the distinct subjects of solemn commemo-
 ration. The deliverance of the three
 estates, assembled in Parliament, from a
 ferocious conspiracy, intended to restore
 the horrors of papal tyranny and super-
 stition, formed a subject of devout exul-
 tation to our ancestors, who remembered
 the

the blazing piles of Smithfield, and abhorred the idolatrous worship of the mass and crucifix. In those times, they had not learned that "God made men to differ" in their way of worship, or that diversity of religions was of no consequence. A subsequent deliverance from the same enemy, and the establishment of regal power upon a more *defined* and *circumscribed*, yet *securer* basis, excited the devout gratitude of the succeeding age; who, in the landing of the "hero William," on the same day as "quenched the fiery mine, and "still'd the tempest under-ground," discovered the same providence which had preserved our Sion from all her enemies, and frustrated their devices.

The murder of a religious and well-principled (if ill advised) Prince upon the scaffold*, by a party who had over-
turned

* An excellent Sermon by Bishop Benson has lately been republished by Rivington, and is well worthy the
the

turned the civil and religious constitution of the kingdom, sown the seeds of discord in the courts of the Lord's house, and broken the bands of that justice which they pretended to revere, was considered as a *deep national disgrace* by all ranks of people, as soon as the phrenzy raised by the cry of King Jesus, and the visionary dreams of a Utopian republic, had subsided into the chilling convictions of shame and folly. Let us hope, that the erasure of these reminiscences from our calendar is yet distant. The mementos of the malevolence of our two ancient enemies should not be swept from the public mind, while indifference to an establishment which neither sanctifies murder, nor authorizes rebellion, is taught as a liberal rudiment of enlarged education. . The
crest-

the attention of all who wish to form a right judgment of the calamitous events which preceded and followed the atrocious murder of King Charles the First.

crest-fallen hierarchy of Rome need not be insulted in this day of their humiliation; but as we have seen, that what again appeared "like the deadly wound" of the beast" has been healed, and its temporal annihilation *suspended*, by its union with apostacy and infidelity, we should be assured, that the spiritual pretensions of the papacy are lowered, and that it has renounced its system of perfidious hostility, before we again leave them at liberty to sharpen their blunted weapons of offence. And we should also know, from incontestable evidence, that the attachment of Calvinism to the limited monarchy of this realm, proceeds from more than regard to expediency, or resentment at having been deceived by those airy vows to liberty, which a fortunate marauder long since gave to the winds, before we can permit her to stand (as she demands

to do) by the side of Episcopacy, as a twin supporter of the English throne*.

Another service was appointed, to welcome the re-establishment of regal and ecclesiastical authority upon its antient basis. The manners of the prince under whose reign this was accomplished, have given occasion to many, beside the champions of republicanism, to doubt whether the Restoration of the second Charles was indeed a blessing. The evils which his administration and debaucheries introduced have passed away ; the good which his restoration confirmed still remains. The nation welcomed the *prepossessing* son of their murdered Prince with frantic rapture ; and, as was natural, rushed from the extremes of sour grimace and insolent pertinacity, to licentious gaiety and fawning obsequiousness. Rebellion was chang-

* The author alludes to the attempts to abolish the Test and Corporation Acts in England.

ed to servility ; profaneness occupied the place of hypocrisy ; arbitrary measures on the part of the court, rendered the necessity of a better check in the constitution apparent ; and this happy alteration, known by the name of the Revolution, was appointed to be commemorated by those additional prayers and praises to “ Him who reigneth, be the earth ever so unquiet,” on which we have before remarked, in treating of the service for the fifth of November. Let our enemies explain, on what grounds they can pretend to charge a church with sanctioning arbitrary power, that has thus solemnly asserted the expedience of sober and judicious resistance to tyrannical and unconstitutional measures. She who blesses God for a deliverance from arbitrary power cannot be a preacher of the doctrine of passive obedience ; though, with true Christian piety and sound political wisdom, she refers every

extraordinary event, whether humiliating or joyful, not to the agency of man, but to the over-ruling will of God, and founds obedience to Kings on submission to the Most High.

The fifth office is intended for the day on which the reigning Sovereign ascends the throne of his ancestors. We, who have been so long blessed with the paternal sway of a mild and virtuous monarch, must join in this service with sentiments of peculiar gratitude; for we must ardently implore the prolongation of his valuable life, and that he may be protected from every foreign and domestic enemy. But this form of prayer is not of such a limited and local nature, as to depend upon the personal virtues of the sovereign for its propriety. A regular government is a blessing; it is a blessing to be under the protection of wise and beneficent laws; it is a blessing to enjoy personal security, to possess

possess political rights, and to have full power over our lawful property, or honest earnings; "to sit under our own vine, "and to pluck the fruit of our own fig-tree." By commemorating the accession of a limited monarch, we hail the confirmation which those blessings derive from the renewal of that regular administration. In praying for the duration of the present royal race, we pray against anarchy and confusion, and all the evils that attend revolutionary interruptions of the succession, and the infirm and capricious government of a new dynasty with a doubtful title to sovereignty. The Church of England is too sensible of her heavenly trust, to adopt the mean adulation which aspiring sects pour into the greedy ear of usurped or dubious greatness, to gain the long-desired, long-envied supremacy. An established religion has nothing more to ask from the state, and readily acquiesces

in the modest dignified obedience of a contented subject. The fawning whine of the sycophant, or the base arts of the slave, would degrade the purity of respectful loyalty. She renders to her Cæsars the tribute and the honour which are their due. She calls them gracious and excellent; and she has scripture on her side, when she addresses persons of high eminence in terms of respect and honour*; but she considers even her present beloved and venerable King as most honoured by the title of “the servant of God.” She requests “that he may be”
 “endued with wisdom and strength, that
 “justice, truth, holiness, and peace, and
 “all other Christian virtues, may flourish
 “in his days.” She implores Heaven
 “that he may rightly discharge his high

* See Acts, 26th chapter, 25th verse; Luke, 1st chapter, 3d verse.

“ duty, and that the work of God may
 “ prosper in his hand ;” and she earnestly
 supplicates for that unity of “ mind and
 “ doctrine” which the Prince of Peace
 so strongly enjoined. She requests, “ that
 “ all her members may obey their King
 “ cheerfully and willingly, for conscience
 “ sake ;” and thus, dividing her atten-
 tion between the safety, honour, and wel-
 fare of the prince, and the happiness of
 the subject, she implores for the one
 “ immortal life after a long and prof-
 “ perous reign,” and for the other every
 blessing that religious peace and virtue
 can bestow. Though worldly prosperity
 may result from the successful machina-
 tions of crooked policy, immortal life can
 only be given to sincere worshippers and
 faithful servants of God. It will be
 difficult in these, or any other addresses
 of our Church, to trace that servile spirit
 of adulation, that passive submission to

mere domination, with which our enemies reproach us*.

We will now pause. The importance of religion to every human character is generally acknowledged; the peculiar comfort and support which it affords to our sex is equally indisputable; the obligation to Christian unity, and communion of worship, is plainly asserted in Scripture; it remains therefore to inquire, to what society do we belong? If we have been baptized into the established Church, our choice was *decided* by that act, in our infancy; for unless we are *convinced* that

* I have not been able to find, in our ritual, more than one epithet that can be construed into a personal compliment to a sovereign, and that is "religious" in the prayer for the high court of parliament. In the present reign, every one will acknowledge its peculiar appropriateness; yet it seems only generally designed to denote professing Christianity.

the

she is unscriptural, we cannot *wander* from her pale and be *guiltless*. We have examined her doctrines, as contrasted with the opposite tenets of her most conspicuous opponents ; and, from their yet more marked dissimilarity to each other, we have seen, that, so far from promoting the cause of union, the destruction of our hierarchy would destroy that rallying point at which we trust contending parties may one day meet : her preservation, therefore, ought to be the wish of all who really pray for the peace of the Christian world.

In a secondary, but not unimportant point of view, we have considered the establishment, not only as being a faithful expounder of the word of God, but as accommodating herself to the character and habits of society, especially to the constitution and sentiments of this nation ; her claims to our preference, consequently, stand upon very high ground. She is

sanctioned by the word of God, and supported by the laws of the realm, general advantage, and individual feeling. A willing obedience to wise and salutary institutions, is the noblest and the happiest use that we can make of the liberty of choice, of which we are so justly tenacious. In the ark which rests on the sure promises of God, we shall be preserved from being tossed about "with every wind of doctrine;" a vast advantage in times like the present. But let us not attribute to our church the *talismanical* powers of an impenetrable *sanctuary*. The purest constituted society cannot bestow impeccability on its individual members. Many who drank instruction at the fountain of all truth, and received the words of life from the lips of the Son of God, will, we are assured by indubitable testimony, be commanded at the last day to "depart as workers of iniquity." Satan still continues

tinues to range to and fro through the earth, seeking to accuse the brethren ; and no severer charge can he bring against them, than that they have neglected to improve those means of grace which have been amply afforded them.

The fruit of right principles is a life of piety and virtue. Christianity is the leaven which imparts its sanctifying energy to every action of this probationary existence. No required duty is too humble to be precluded from intermixing with evangelical graces. The cup of cold water, kindly and devoutly offered to the thirsty lip of want, will, like the widow's mite, be measured by the ability and intention of the giver ; while the pompous alms of ostentation will receive their reward in that praise of men which they sought to obtain.

We will, in my next letter, discuss those amiable virtues of womanhood which flow

from, and are sanctioned by, a spirit of true religion. The short remains of the present epistle shall be devoted to a consideration, which ought never to be banished from theological controversy ; I mean *Christian*, not *philosophistical* liberality. As the latter holds all forms of faith indifferent, the former determines that if we would work out our own salvation we must not rest in form. As the latter conceives disputation to mean the art of establishing your own importance by the defeat of your adversary, the former separates the cause from the advocate, and mingles compassion for deceivers, with abhorrence of deception *. With one, all means are lawful

* “ Though Christ hath no fellowship with Be-
 “ lial,” says the seraphic Taylor in his *Life of*
Christ ; “ yet the consideration of the crime of
 “ heresy, which is a spiritual wickedness, is to be
 “ separated from the person of the heretic, who is
 “ material ;” page 188. He proceeds to state the
 dangers

lawful that secure conquest; with the other, truth itself must not be defended by unwarrantable measures.

Again

danger, to weak minds, of conversing with subtle heretics; and, quoting the story of St. John and Cerinthus from Irenæus, commends the apostle in such an *extreme* case, but cautions us against severity of judgment on *slight* grounds. The name of Bishop Taylor having been mentioned, it may not be improper to observe, that though his fervent piety, acting upon a lively and brilliant imagination, sometimes transports him into the bounds of mysticism and fancy, yet he appears rather inclined to ascetic than puritanic errors. He borrows his illustrations from pagan history, or popish martyrologies. On the disputed points of doctrine, he appears steadily in opposition to Calvin's distinguishing tenets. He was himself a prelate, and a sound friend to episcopacy. He determines predestination to be "God's great secret, not to be inquired into curiously;" (ibid. page 313.) His opinion of original sin has been already noticed. In opposition to the doctrine of assurance or certainty of salvation, he quotes the strong case of Judas, to whom a throne in Heaven,
and

Again let me repeat, that as there were offenders under the old law, and yet the law was "holy, just, and good;" so in the purest congregation in point of doctrine, there may be the most corrupt and barren members. Our church urges no general or particular claims to infallibility. She is a "congregation of faithful men, in which
 ' the pure word of God is preached, and
 ' the sacraments duly ministered accord-
 ' ing to Christ's ordinance, in all things
 ' that of necessity are requisite to the
 ' same*.'" But "as no congregation can
 ' be assembled in unity of worship, with-
 ' out many previous forms and binding
 ' rules, not absolutely prescribed by scrip-
 ' ture,"

and the judgement of a tribe, were promised. In opposition to the doctrine of invincible grace, see page 216. These references are enough to disprove what some of our opponents would persuade the uninformed to believe, that this great luminary of our church was a Calvinist.

* Article 19th.

"ture*," it follows, that as what is human must be imperfect, there will be some defects in the constitution of the society, as well as faults in the practice of its members. Allowing that those who seek to remedy these errors are really influenced by singleness of heart, these renovators are still not angels, but men, finite beings, not guided by the unerring wisdom of God. Whoever knows the world, will confess that more mischief is done by defective judgement, than by positive depravity. The wisdom of past ages has erected for us a noble pile, under which we may safely shelter. Its architecture is constructed by those established rules which ensure beauty, strength, convenience, and durability. In the ornaments, the builders have somewhat indulged their fancy; and neglect has not only obliterated some of its exquisite carvings, but the injuries that

* Hey's Lectures.

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it has received from external violence make it necessary to repair its parapets, and to strengthen its walls with additional buttresses. Yet all who feel the comfortable protection of this venerable sanctuary, will equally guard against the admission of *new* and *fantastical* embellishments on the one hand, and those *retrenchments* that would eventually weaken the building on the other; even though they were recommended by the plea of rendering it more light and airy, and better adapted to the present times. The errors and the pertinacity of the papacy *imposed* an awful *responsibility* on our ancestors: Blessed be God! we are not called upon to *build* a church, but to *defend* one. Let us fight her battles with the holy weapons of Christian charity, and endeavour by the liveliness of our faith, and the innocence of our lives, to prevent her from becoming that adulterous and barren spouse, who shall
be

be finally repudiated by her long-suffering but righteous Lord.

While one description of our adversaries accuses us for neglecting morals, another charges us with being cold formalists, and dependers upon our own righteousness. I trust these censures are, generally speaking, unjust. But the appeal must be made to the Searcher of hearts, not to the partial short-sighted judgement of man. Much industry has of late been used, in obtruding upon popular attention, the biographical characters of schismatics and non-conformists. I mean not to question the verity of the high qualifications ascribed to them. I sincerely wish their virtues may be such as will stand the scrutiny of the great audit. But as a warning to others I must remark, that the distinguishing feature of their characters, which seems to be the reason for giving them this celebrity, was a *fault* or a *misfortune*.

fortune, not an excellence or advantage. While their dissent from the establishment is placed in the most prominent point of view, are we uncandid in suspecting that these worthies are not removed from “the cool sequestered vale of life,” and held up to public estimation, to recommend the practice of Christian or domestic duty; but to give a preponderance to the party which they espoused, and to seduce those by example, who cannot be convinced by argument? The true method of parrying such assaults is, not to rake into the secrets of private families for petty anecdotes of detraction; but to remember, that we also are inhabitants of “a city that *is set on a hill and cannot be hid.*” Though we are forbidden to “do our good works” purposely “to be seen of men,” or to look to the praise of our fellow-mortals as an *adequate and substantial* reward; yet we are commanded to avoid all occasion of reproach,

reproach, and to “let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in Heaven.”

But if the force of our arguments, or the sanctity of our manners (which are the true Christian weapons of controversy), will not avail to enlarge the courts of the daughter of Sion, we must not adopt the Satanical warfare, of unjust coercion or illiberal invective. You are not *compelled* to embrace the scruples and conceits of your neighbours, to whom you are *required* to render all the common offices of general benevolence or particular good-will. Though the absurd or vicious consequences of their singularities of opinion may strike you forcibly, their intellectual perception may be too indistinct to discover their own back-slidings; and thus, what in you would be *sin*, may in them be only *error*. To conclude: let us be especially

cially careful, never to render railing for railing, nor to charge our adversaries falsely, nor to transfer the sayings or vices of any individual to the whole party to which he belongs. To use the words of an eminent ornament and champion of our church, "As we know not what
 "degrees of incredulity will exclude
 "men from Heaven, let not Christian
 "zeal overthrow Christian charity. The
 "Searcher of Hearts alone knows the
 "circumstances which may diminish the
 "guilt of infidelity; and to his uncove-
 "nanted mercies let us leave the rejecter
 "of his revelation, and the impenitent
 "breaker of his laws *."

I remain, my dear Miss M——, &c.

* Bishop of Lincoln's Elements of Theology.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

On the Virtues more especially feminine.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

IT has often been observed, that principle speaks in practice; right opinions, faithfully adhered to, will operate in virtuous and steady conduct; otherwise they must increase the condemnation and confirm the misery of the mind that lives at variance with its own determinations, and suffers its judgement to satirize its actions.

If we look at the general manners of the age, and particularly of our own sex, since *fixed* religious principles were voted to be the cumbrous brocade of illiberal bigotry; we must acknowledge, that indifference

difference has dressed out the world in a very airy summer suit of changeable levity. Novelty prescribes the mode which negligence adopts ; and provided there be but a change, no matter whether we vary from bad to good, or from bad to worse. We plume ourselves on having renounced the stubborn pertinacity of our ancestors ; but, alas ! our attachment to our new customs, new discoveries, new virtues, and new religions (don't smile at my supposed mistake ; *virtues* and *religions* now sprout like mushrooms, and are of as equivocal a generation), makes up in warmth, what it wants in duration ; and thus, like Dryden's Zimri, we continue

“ Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong ;

“ Every thing by starts, and nothing long.”

To commence our observations with the cardinal virtue of our sex. General opinion has undergone an amazing change within a few years on the subject of chastity :

tity : I do not speak of those who have really violated her laws, but of the indifference or playful sarcasm with which untainted characters speak of the most flagrant derelictions of decorum. I am not one of those rigid censors, who would bar an unhappy woman's return to virtue, by excluding her from every cheering prospect of compassion and hope. The punishment of *culprits* should in this, as in every other instance, be determined by what is due to the *unoffending* part of society. It was formerly thought, that with respect to women, a forfeited reputation in this particular could never be regained. It was not from enmity to real penitence, but from an anxiety to preserve innocence, that a woman was supposed to have so far degraded herself by unchastity, as to be rendered incapable of ever more filling her former rank in society. To hide herself from the world, or to fly to some spot

spot where her shame was unknown, used to be the wish of humbled, but not abandoned frailty; and while her weeping companions pitied her sorrow, they were roused by her disgrace to more vigilant circumspection; and thus the mournful consequences of one seduction prevented many.

How pathetically, and with what delicate respect to the chariness of female reputation, has Shenstone pourtrayed his lovely, deluded, and repentant Jeffy! She is, indeed, the artless maid, “sustain’d
“ by virtue, but subdued by love.” She falls, as a really innocent girl is most likely to fall, not by the temptation of vanity, avarice, or ambition; but by the desire of removing from the mind of the beloved object, “affected scorn, artful
“ doubts, and pretended rage.” She will sacrifice herself, rather than suffer her insidious seducer to suspect the reality of
her

her affection. The sacrifice is made, and she becomes, not as a poet would now paint her, more interesting, more amiable, by her credulity ; “ but, scorn’d by “ virtue, stigmatiz’d by fame,” and compelled to fly from a deriding world, she implores the compassion of the traitor by whom she had been undone. But what, shall we ask, is the purport of her appeal ? Is it to call upon him to fulfil the promise which ensnared her weakness, or to threaten him with public punishment ? Does an *obstreperous abusive* father accompany the vindictive offender ; proposing, by his overwhelming insolence, to found the future aggrandisement of his family on his daughter’s shame ? No, the dejected Jessy, deeply conscious that Henry’s arts could not have completed her ruin had not her treacherous heart been his ally, comes, without those whose cheeks she had tinged with shame, to solicit such

a pittance as might preserve her from mingling in "the vulgar crew," or begging "her scanty bread," and allow her to hide her woes in some remote corner, where, "banish'd from the form she lov'd, her weeping virtue would relapse no more." With a delicacy of sentiment which could only enter into the most refined imagination, she appeals to no other passion than his pity. The name of wife, which some artful female might endeavour to acquire, would, she justly observes, "neither sooth her grief nor clear her fame;" since it could no longer be the free gift of generous love, but the reluctant bond of reproachful compassion. With all the mildness of genuine modesty, she rather considers the pangs that her miseries may give her betrayer, than the woes which she herself endures; and though every object that she beholds speaks reproach to her susceptible

ceptible heart, and tells her, " we are
 " spotless, Jessy; we are pure;" she
 dares not ask for the death for which she
 languishes, " lest her sad fate should nou-
 " rish pangs for" her still beloved Henry.

If we form an opinion of the present
 state of national manners from the most
 favoured productions of the theatre, how
 great must be our falling off; not in *ver-
 bal decorum* indeed, but in what is far
 more important, *virtuous principle*. In
 what we now consider as the licentious
 period of British comedy, vicious women
 were introduced; but it was in the light
 of degraded and disgusting objects. It is
 true, even the heroines often talked inde-
 licately; but they always acted chastely.
 The times were then unrefined, and
 blunt* coarseness of expression was not

* Examples of what we should now call inelegant
 bluntness may be taken from the justly admired letters
 of Lady Rachel Ruffel.

considered as an offence against morals or manners. I am unwilling to admit, that the character of our sex is really as much debased as their theatrical portrait persuades us to suppose. I rather hope, that the magic of the scene, and the attractive colourings of favourite actors, have made exceptionable passages pass unregarded, and diverted the attention of the audience from the tendency of the plot, to the sprightliness of the exhibition. Yet it is an extraordinary coincidence, that in the three pieces that have been of late most honoured with public favour, the Stranger, Pizarro, and John Bull, the heroines are women of lost character*. The first of these plays has already encountered the just reprehensions of an admirable moralist†. I think this Lady observes, that Adelaide was the first

* The same remark applies to Lovers' Vows.

† See Mrs. More's Strictures on Education.

adulteress who was ever exhibited in a favourable point of view to a British audience. It escaped her recollection at the moment, that Rowe had contrived to give our sex an excellent lesson in his historical play of Jane Shore. But though we pity and forgive this *real* penitent, and though she is by far the most interesting character in this captivating tragedy, we return from seeing it exhibited, with very different sentiments from those with which we have witnessed the efforts of its German copyist. By the one, *virtue* is confirmed, from seeing the predicted "ruin, reproach, " and endless shame," dreadfully exemplified; by the other, her foundation is undermined, and conjugal infidelity seems not so bad or so irreparable an offence; since it appears likely that Adelaide and her injured Lord will be very happy after all that has passed.

Elvira, in the play of Pizarro, does not lay claim to our favour by even the *pretence* of repentance. As a professed religionist, she is perjured; as a daughter, disobedient; as a woman, indelicate; as a mistress, furious and vindictive. She follows a soldier of fortune in quest of adventures; her love, stung by neglect, changes to hatred: and she endeavours to instigate a man, whom her gallant had injured, to commit the murder which her heart dictated, though her arm wanted courage to perform. Yet she is, after all, a most benevolent creature, and by much the best of the Christian groupe in this avowedly *Pagan* composition. Cora, the all attractive savage, only *alludes* to the former part of her history in this piece; but if we trace it through the first part of Kotzebue's Peruvian Dramas, we shall find her equally qualified, by liberality of idea, and freedom of conduct, to secure
the

the applause of a German auditory. I must felicitate my country-women that the Virgin of the Sun, Stella, and the Robbers, are still thought too strong to be submitted to the decision of an English audience; the inference, that we are less corrupted than our neighbours, would present some consolatory ideas, did not a play of native growth call for severe castigation.

The seduction of Mary Thornbury, in John Bull*, is so *unnecessary* to the plot, that many believe it was gratuitously introduced, to conciliate the favour of the frail sisterhood, who form so *numerous* and *conspicuous* a part of the audience. A broken contract would have served the author's ends quite as well as personal

* There is so much genuine humour in the low characters in this play, that it is mortifying to see it sophisticated by a mixture of maudlin sentiment and pseudo-morality.

violation, and given (in the opinion of some people) a better pretence for that fine stage-effect in which a British handicraftsman blackguards a British magistrate, to the infinite satisfaction of the roaring galleries. That a young woman's being a strumpet gives her a right to be a wife, is *new* doctrine; but it must be in perfect unison with the sentiments of all the pretty housemaids and smart abigails in the kingdom; and must induce them to persevere in that style of dress, and mode of behaviour, which is best calculated to convince the young heir of the family that they may be prevailed upon to qualify for the title of "My Lady." It is so evidently the author's design to compliment the mobility, at the expence of the privileged orders, that I suppose he considered the very moderate share of intellect which he has allowed to Mary, as giving her such a decided superiority over
his

his *fools* of quality, that it would have been invidious supererogation to have added the discretion and innocence of a Pamela. Are our gentry and nobles then so very corrupt, that a brazier's daughter is too *deserving* to be adopted into a great family, unless prostitution has lowered her to the level of their contamination?

But would not the libertine's being compelled to marry the victim of his treachery be a means of checking the crime of seduction? It might, indeed, make men more *guarded* through *fear*; but is there not great reason to conclude, that it would render women *profligate*, from *cunning* and *ambition*? The sex of the offence might be changed, but the frequency of seduction would be increased. Let women (especially those in humble life) suspect that modesty and innocence are no longer their chief recommendations to a creditable establishment, and inconceiv-

able mischiefs will ensue. The contrary opinion has already gained ground. Seduction, strictly speaking, is now a rare offence. Jealousy for the honour of my own sex makes me wish, that the Henrys of the present day did not find us too easy a conquest, to need "that expence, and art, and toil," which constitute the superior guilt of the betrayer of unsuspecting virtue. I fear the criminals of either sex now meet on more equal ground ; for in that rank of life in which the prowling debauchee used to look for his bashful and retiring prey, I see the wanton lure of artifice, and the bold front of invitation.

An examination of the tendency of that class of literature which meets with the most numerous readers, would prove very derogatory to those pure elevated ideas of virtue by which we used to estimate the character of English women. Not to dwell on the tenderness with which most
 novel-

novel-writers treat female unchastity, let us advert to the recent production* of a fair illuminati, as a proof of the melancholy justness of the remark, that loose morals, disguised in guarded language, are more dangerous, because less alarmingly obvious, than the warm colouring of Congreve and Farquhar, or the gross indecency of Vanbrugh. Nothing can be so dangerous to virtue, as the soft names that are given to vice. Dressed in the engaging shape of "amiable indiscretions," and "venial errors," or perhaps in the bolder attire of "those frailties which honour the heart," we must take some time to reflect, before we can discover that we are speaking of Sin, the daughter of Satan, and mother of Death.

I have already cautioned you against the phrases of liberality of sentiment, enlarged ideas, and universal philanthropy, as

* Delphine, by Madame Stael.

far as relates to your religious opinions, I have ventured to assure you, that principle is not prejudice, nor steadiness bigotry. These cautionary suggestions will extend to the subject of which we now treat. At a period wherein the distant motives of a future state of existence have so little hold upon most people, the opinion of the world, and general behaviour, ought not to relax in any point which may be favourable to immorality. I know of nothing more likely to do this, than the turn which the public mind has taken on the subject of female profligacy. It really seems as if beauty could not be made engaging, nor simplicity amiable, unless relieved by the dark shade of illicit love. In the high walks of society, how few hesitate at visiting *blasted* characters, or shewing them the respect to which only untainted reputation was once thought entitled ! and those who still avoid them are
sure

sure to be ranked among the outrageously virtuous, who, piquing themselves upon one good quality, commute, by their severity to a fallen sister, for every fordid or splenetic inclination. Opinion (I know not on what stable ground) has established a fantastic alliance between light behaviour and benevolence, and a good heart is always pleaded in excuse for vile conduct.

But shall not the penitent be forgiven? Unquestionably she shall. Let kindred and friendship hasten to lead home the wanderer, and act, as nearly as frail mortality can, the part of those pure and blessed spirits who rejoice over the *contrite* sinner. Let her home be made as comfortable as forgiveness can make it; but let not kindness, with mistaken zeal, seek to divert the mild dejection which ought to accompany remorse, by scenes of dissipation, or by giving celebrity to what requires

requires to be concealed. The interests of virtue cannot be promoted, by permitting those who have wandered from her path to preside at scenes of public festivity, or to dictate amusements. The penitent Jessy had no wish to shew the face which grief had furrowed, among the happy and the innocent: concealment and forgetfulness bounded her earthly views.

Humanity to the broken-hearted victim of conscious error, differs so widely from the servile court which we every day see paid to prosperous vice, that nothing but an invidious design of lowering all moral distinctions could confound the two principles. If we rightly analyze the opinions and practices of these advocates for indiscriminate mixture of company, we shall find, that it is not for the sake of the sad recluse, that these *tender-bearted* apologists solicit us to be kind to a frail sinner's faults; but for some most engaging creature, the

“ orna-

“ornament of society,” who it is “mild
 “lions of pities” should be lost to the
 world. It is some faded courtezan, some
 elegant accomplished genius, who has
rather deviated from the straight path of
 virtue, and who now, finding herself de-
 serted by lovers, wishes to acquire patrons
 and friends. It is some one who *sorrows*,
 not *repents*; and let us observe, that this
 distinction is important. The one, like
 Julia in Measure for Measure, “repents
 “her that it is a sin, and takes the shame
 “with joy.” The latter, like the volup-
 tuous Cleopatra, laments that she has lost
 “her curled Anthony,” that the juice of
 “Egypt’s grape no more shall moist her
 “lip,” or, “that she shall be shewn in
 “her fallen state to the shouting varlety
 “of censuring Rome.”

It is not uncommon for women of this
 latter description to complain of cruel
 usage, and to censure the world which
 they

they have scandalized by their conduct. They once indeed enjoyed celebrity; but it was the celebrity of guilt and extravagance; and where is it promised, that these shall possess “an abiding city” even in *this* world? the treasures which these daughters of licentiousness squandered were not only the wages of sin, but *purloined* from the funds of justice or benevolence; or, possibly, the long-accumulated deposit of some noble family, whose thoughtless heir easily fell into their net, and sacrificed to their caprice the honourable reward of the labours or heroism of his ancestors. The parasites and followers which those treasures purchased were nothing but a swarm of summer-insects, who prey upon the fostering carrion. The winter of affliction or neglect ever sends “these slaves” to thousands” to seek a new idol, who then “flames in the ascendant.” We have all of us but too great reason to say
with

with the prophet, "Wherefore should a
 " living man complain? a man for the
 " punishment of his sins?" But surely
 the exculpatory style of slighted merit,
 or injured desert, is peculiarly unsuitable
 to those polluted lips, whose voice should
 never be publicly heard, but in supplica-
 tions for mercy and forgiveness. Women
 of pleasure have formerly published their
 histories; but I believe those licentious
 compositions were then thought only cal-
 culated for their own impure meridian,
 nor did they *publicly* lie on the toilette of
 high-born uncontaminated beauty. As a
 proof that gentle words and insinuating ad-
 dress increase the dangerous attractions of
 vice, let me remark, that no woman now
 blushes to own that she has read the apolo-
 getical narratives of the courtezans of these
 days. Infamy is so disguised, so dressed,
 so tricked out with false colours, that even
 chastity stops to inquire whether any thing
 really

really was wrong ; perplexed by the well-sounding sentences of “ marriages made in “ Heaven,” “ attachments of the heart,” and “ interesting friendships.”

Severe censors are apt to complain, that the freedom of modern manners borders upon a degree of levity inimical to decorum. As the starched formality of our ancestors seemed better calculated to be the state cloak of design, than the every-day attire of artless innocence, I do not lament that some of the fortifications, which sage sagacity drew around heedless beauty, are demolished ; and that the youth of both sexes are permitted to enjoy the pleasure of easy society, without the eternal restraint of the prying duenna, or suspicious maiden aunt. But this relaxation in manners enforces the necessity of defending the heart by a yet stronger horror of vice. Unless principle guards the mind,

bars.

bars and bolts cannot protect the person. By filling a young woman's ideas with supposed plots against her honour, you teach her intrigue and cunning, instead of discretion ; and it is very probable, that you may inspire the generally fatal wish of spreading her net to entrap the imaginary seducer, and thus really expose herself to the snares which her own folly has created.

A prudent young woman, who is destitute of any sinister design, unless beside the treacherous gift of beauty she happen to be placed in a situation of conspicuous danger or uneasy dependance, has little cause to fear the arts of a libertine ; who, like the felon kite, rarely pounces but upon *certain* prey.

The decline of what are termed gallant attentions to the younger part of our sex, and the yawning indifference with which our fine gentlemen endure the fatigue of talking to *the girls* at public places, bespeak
a strange

a strange revolution in manners, which our grey-haired spinsters attribute to the relaxed deportment of the present race of belles, bespeaking them ready to be won before they are *wooed*. I feel more apt to transfer the censure to the *married* part of our sex, who too often set an example of freedom of carriage, and impropriety of dress, which custom has not yet warranted a young woman to adopt. Chastity is finely described, as a beautiful form, “ With
 “ blushes reddening as she moves along,
 “ disorder’d at the deep regard she draws;” not because her pure imagination has converted every beholder into a tremendous giant, who is preparing to entangle her in his ponderous net; but because observation hurts her retiring delicacy. Should such a gentle passenger fall into any of those deep abysses which are scattered in her path, it will not be from her curiosity to explore those regions of darkness, nor
 from

from having her attention diverted from her own steps, by a desire to captivate the by-standers with her soft attractions. Her danger will, however, be materially increased, if the mouths of these caverns are strewn with flowers ; and the peril becomes more imminent, if those warning memorials, which were inscribed with the narratives of past misfortune, are *insidiously* removed ; but if the witnesses of this fair lady's pilgrimage unite to assure her, that these fearful caves are in reality only pleasant agreeable grottos, and that if (contrary to their expectation) she should *happen* to dislike the society and accommodations which they afford, she will not be detained a prisoner in these subterraneous dwellings, but may revisit the light of day, or, like the famous twins of Leda, alternately inhabit the infernal and celestial regions, partake of the impure banquet of Proserpine, or drink nectar with the gods ; to whom

whom shall we ascribe the fault, if the fair traveller no longer passes on with “un-
“blenched majesty,” but yields “to
“pride or to presumption?”

Allegory is a pleasant mode of illustrating our opinions. Let us suppose another pilgrim journeying through the wilds of life, whose character renders these mementos of danger still more necessary, though certainly her fall would be less lamented. The manners of the times, and the prevailing style of education, tend to render women at once extravagant and dependant; girls can do nothing to maintain themselves; they must therefore at all events *get husbands*; it requires a considerable expence to support them in style; there is no living out of style; a *rich husband* therefore is also necessary; I grant, that a good establishment in life has been the point at which young women always have aimed; but as, formerly, they were not quite

quite reduced to such a style of helplessness, as to be merely a peg on which you are to hang finery, it was not necessary that husbands should be so very rich ; and then, as there was more of the commodity in the market, the intended purchasers were not forced to look so very sharp. As adventurers of this latter description are more likely to fall into ambuscades, and as I fear their number is far more numerous than that of those saintly maidens whom we have just noticed, surely, instead of cutting down the direction posts, they should be *multiplied* at every corner. In that contest between the sexes, which consists in the lady's endeavouring to entrap a wealthy partner who will let her dash, and the gentleman's wishing to seize upon some pretty girl who will look smart in his phaeton, success (as it is called) generally crowns the hero. Let not this combat of artifice be rendered yet more unequal

unequal on the heroine's side, by her being pre-assured that to *yield* is to *conquer*; nor let the smiling sophist of false compassion assure her, that so little disgrace is attached to defeat, that people go on just as well *without* as *with* a character.

It is superfluous to state how strongly religion recommends the virtue of which we have been treating, or how positively it denounces the wrath of God against all who live in a course of those sins, which are now adorned in such soft colours by our pseudo-sentimental moralists. It is only by a dereliction of religious principle, that the world can lose sight of the enormity of those vices which are opposite to purity. I will therefore only repeat the observation, that our Lord has extended those personal restraints, which the law of nature and the Mosaical covenant enjoined, to "the inward man;" and, having banished sin from its secret holds,
he

he pronounced the sublime beatitude of the pure in heart, namely, that "they shall see God."

The next feminine quality on which I mean to offer a few remarks is benevolence. This is a plant which, if not of native growth, is so congenial to the soil of this country, that there is no period of our history in which its fruits have not been copious. Wealth, like a rich manure, has produced a yet more redundant crop; and in these times of commercial prosperity, it seems only necessary to publish distress to procure liberal aid. To stimulate the hand of affluence to shake its superflux to want, is therefore an unnecessary task; fashion has lent her aid to beneficence; and avarice is with one consent hunted from society, and forced to hide in contempt behind his heaps of gold. Shall I be classed among his *latent* votaries, if I lament, that in the rage of crying

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ing down *parsimony*, a very valuable housewife of past times, who assisted our ancestors in distributing their frugal bounty, has been sent to Coventry, after that “curled carle hated of God and men?” And yet, without *æconomy*, benevolence can have few disciples. To give what you scarcely know how else to apply, can hardly be called an exercise of that charity “which seeketh not her own.” It is by the sacrifice of our pleasures, or by the limitation of our desires and accustomed comforts, that we fulfil the two injunctions of “letting our moderation be known to all men,” and of “doing to others as we would they should do unto us.” *Beneficence*, like “mercy, is blessed in him who gives and in him who takes,” when, by exercising this quality at the expence of a favourite inclination, we prevent our passions from gaining domination over us, and obtain a real conquest over ourselves

ourselves by the act which administers succour to the afflicted. The pleasure of giving, is never so exquisitely felt as when, by experiencing some privations, we can more forcibly contrast the different sensations of enjoyment and want. In proportion as the cravings of self-love are forced into a narrow sphere, the generous feelings of good-will expand. Nor is the advantage limited to this one point; by thinking less of our own wants and desires, the real evils of life are rendered more supportable. I have seen (and your recollection, my dear Miss M——, will enable you to identify the instance I allude to) the pangs of an excruciating disease diminished, by the attention of the sufferer being diverted to the wants of the sick villagers; and when food failed to strengthen her own languid frame, and medicine had nothing to offer but the Lethean draught of *suspended* sense, we have both beheld the

pallid countenance lighted up by the benevolent intentions of a heart practised in the duty of considering the necessities of its fellow-creatures.

Unless Benevolence chance to be the adopted child of affluence, it must acknowledge self-denial and œconomy for its parents. If it have the Christian grace of charity for its instructor, and the love of God for its motive, it must *prefer* but not *affect* privacy. It speaks in all the actions of social life, and it brightens the smile of conjugal or maternal affection. As a daughter, it is attentive and dutiful; it is liberal and considerate as a sister. It exercises its heavenly-mindedness in various ways, beside the mere act of giving; and among its valuable endowments we must reckon the meekness with which it endures the reproach of parsimony, from those who only discern its care to *avoid* unnecessary expence, but not its *appropriation*

privation of its little hoards. It is not anxious to be known as the first patroness of any new charity; but if the wants of those who have a claim to its assistance leave any surplus, it drops its dole unobserved into the treasury of some approved institution. You will observe, I am here speaking of that style of benevolence which suits a woman of a private station and moderate fortune. When rank, power, or affluence, enlarge the sphere of our influence, our efforts to serve our fellow-creatures should take a wider range, and consequently must attract celebrity. It is the consideration, that limited powers cannot do much, well; and that a *little*, well performed, is better than a lame partial execution of *great* designs, which makes me recommend to the generality of my sex the regular performance of known virtues, in preference to that eager pursuit of distant theoretical good, which is likely

to expose them to the assaults of vanity, or the misery of disappointment. In the station where Providence has placed us, our exertion is most required and will be most beneficial.

Contrasted with the character of in-born, and often unobserved benevolence, let us next exhibit that showy liberality which passes so extremely well in the world. It has been humorously identified, by a person's anxiously soliciting to carry the plate at public contributions, as the only way of *escaping* from subscribing his mite. Great zeal for the indigent, is adopted by many as the readiest passport to the tables of the great; where, by a willing sacrifice of time, and a little adroit management, they gain the name of "most worthy creatures." If they have no near connexions to reproach them with inattention, I have only to hope that their judgement and integrity are as unquestionable as their
zeal

zeal is conspicuous ; they may then prove safe and expeditious channels to convey the overflowings of prosperity to the thirsty soil of want. Yet, unless circumstances impose a necessity for so doing, I would, on many accounts, interdict the intervention of an almoner ; and this on more general motives than the misapplications which sometimes occur. The giver should not lose the benefit of that personal acquaintance with sorrow, which strengthens the social ties, corrects the caprices of fastidious self-importance, and turns the narrow aims of individual gratification, into gratitude to that Providence who appoints wealth as the *steward* and *dispenser*, rather than the *consumer* of its accumulated bounties. I might also add, how much this benevolent intercourse between the rich and poor, the great and lowly, enlarges the mind and improves the manners of both parties. When a lady of

rank surveys a healthy groupe of young cottagers, vying with each other for skill and adroitness at their various occupations, and watching with anxious glance the hour-glass, which, if nearly exhausted, upbraids them with having previously loitered, and reminds them of the probability of their dame's inflicting an additional task, she may form some notion of the value of the moments which she is anxious to waste. Or when she sees the care-worn mother dividing the brown loaf in equal portions among her children, whose countenances brighten with the glow of pleasure as they successively relieve the cravings of hunger, she may learn to compare the expences of vanity and benevolence, and to estimate their specific gratifications. But the bed of sickness, especially when attended by its frightful concomitant, penury, will afford her the best lesson to check the repinings of discontent.

content, and all the various pangs of envy, ambition, and pride, which teach the sickly daughters of spleen to quarrel with prosperity. On the side of the indigent, this social intercourse with their superiors would prove the best check to the democratical spirit that is let loose among them. They would find themselves often called upon to observe the attractions of graceful manners, and the advantage of superior information. The narrow, but too general prejudice, which has been excited against the apparently more favoured part of our species, would be abated; and grateful attachment to friends and benefactors, would soon eradicate the idea that lords and ladies are but poor creatures, were it not that they have got the upper hand in this world.

Much previous knowledge of humble life is necessary, to enable the liberally-disposed heart to distribute its bounty with

discretion. Indiscriminate relief is worse than injudicious; it is prejudicial. Knowledge of what a poor family ought to earn, and what they must spend, should (except in extreme cases) precede relief. Much public injury is done by increasing the luxurious habits which are become so very prevalent in the lower classes. High wages and great earnings are, in general, the parents of dissipation and want. As a trading nation, these exorbitant demands must ultimately ruin our manufactures, by enhancing their price; and if we consider the case as relating to a Christian country, we have only to compare the morals of the poor in a flourishing manufacturing town, and in an obscure country village, to see the evils that ensue from profuse gains.

Society, therefore, cannot be benefited by introducing expensive refinements into humble life; and it is melancholy to reflect, that habitual alms, if *very liberally* bestowed,

bestowed, often corrupts the manners of the individual whom it particularizes. Industry should be *assisted* and *stimulated*, not *deadened* or *superseded*; and, except in cases of urgent calamity, a moral preference should be observed. This is certainly contrary to the inverted climax, by which false philanthropy ascends “from the crush’d beetle,” to “poor suffering-guilt,” and excludes from its sympathy only those objects which should most powerfully attract it; but false philanthropy is the puling offspring of sentiment and feeling, not of principle. Beneath its influence, a Peregrine Rochdale, who has run away from his father without any provocation, shall only be anxious to preserve the ten thousand pounds which he capriciously destines to reward an accidental benefaction; but shall express no solicitude to know whether his deserted family are in existence, or need his assistance;

ance; though he certainly must have owed them infinitely superior obligations, which he does not even pretend were cancelled by unkindness. A Charles Surface, directed by the same tutor, shall defraud a creditor, and bestow a large sum on an unknown petitioner. But those who direct the feelings of humanity by the light of the gospel well know, that they are first required to shew “ piety at home, and “ to requite their parents; for that is “ good and acceptable before God* ;” because “ if any provide not for his own, “ and especially for those of his own “ house, he hath denied the faith, and is “ worse than an infidel.” Thus expressly does the religion of the blessed Jesus strengthen and confirm that evidence which nature bears to the primary obligation of domestic duties, and especially to the filial and parental, which our philanthro-

* 1st Timothy, chap. 5th, 4th and 8th verses.

pists,

pists, in their rage for improvement, call the "blindest modification of self-love," and determine, that, "the mind should be "steeled against the absurd prejudice of "obeying a parent, merely because he is "a parent." And with respect to our allowing liberality to precede honesty, scripture records a decided prohibition, by exhorting us to "provide things honest "in the sight of all men," and "to owe "no man any thing, save to love one "another." These are plain contradictions to the tenets of the new Lyceum, which here, as in every other case, decrees that pleasure should precede duty*.

We must not, however, argue from these positive precepts, that because we have relations or creditors, we may *neglect* the general exercise of benevolence. One scripture rule must be expounded by ano-

* Whoever bestowed an alms, without feeling that giving was the most exquisite of pleasures?

ther ;

ther ; and every virtue kept in its right position, by a close contact with its neighbouring good quality. “ Whoso hath this
 “ world’s goods, and seeth his brother
 “ have need, and shutteth up the bowels
 “ of compassion from him, how dwelleth
 “ the love of God in him?” Compassion and lenity are placed in the Gospel on a much more stable basis than sentiment or feeling could provide. We are to forgive our offending brethren, because “ God
 “ has forgiven us ;” we are to relieve the distresses of those who want our aid, “ because of the exceeding great kindness
 “ which our heavenly Father and our
 “ only Saviour have shewn to us.” If our limited means will not keep pace with our wishes of doing good, we must not enlarge them by an unjust appropriation of what is not lawfully our own, but by the cheerful retrenchment or sacrifice of individual enjoyment. We
 must

must *husband* our little modicum with more care, bestow it with more cautious selection; and endeavour to add to its value by such an appropriation of *time* or *talents*, as our conscience shall tell us will best answer the end of promoting the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures.

As a contrast to the random or dishonest schemes which false liberality presents, in fantastic arbitrary rewards of mere favourites, accidental benefactors, partizans, or interesting sufferers, who have only local or capricious claims to attention, permit me to recommend to your serious consideration, that example of *discreet benevolence*, which the *secondary* purpose of the parable of the Good Samaritan presents to all subsequent ages of the Christian world, as forcibly as its *first intention* spake to the hearts of its immediate hearers. This truly beneficent character

racter does not neglect his own immediate concerns, and set off on a romantic pilgrimage in search of people in distress. He is quietly journeying, when he meets with a man lying on the road, robbed, stripped of his raiment, severely wounded, and half dead. A priest and a Levite, the interpreter of the law and officiating minister of religion, have not only *seen* the sufferer at a distance, but have actually *gone near* him, discovered it to be no case of *pretended* calamity, and having thus gratified their curiosity, with unnatural indifference they “ have passed by on the “ other side,” and left him to the care of chance passengers, regardless whether these will assist his miseries, or imitate their own inhumanity. But in the heart of the Samaritan compassion is an innate principle which only waits to be called into action. He stays not to inquire, whether the sufferer be a countryman or a stranger, a friend

friend or a foe. He hastens to him, “ binds
 “ up his wounds, pours in oil and wine,
 “ sets him upon his own beast, brings
 “ him to an inn, and takes care of him.”

A sentimental philanthropist of the new school would have considered this delineation of the offices of benevolence as very *cold* and *insipid*. The Samaritan, with them, would have *devoted* himself to the services of this unhappy unknown; every plan of business, every tie of private affection or early connection, would have been *superseded*, if not *annihilated*. We should have seen the kind benefactor incessantly watching by the bed of the wounded man, who, if he recovered, would have become from thenceforth his dearest friend, or if he died would have been the object of his perpetual regret. The scripture, however, informs us, that the Good Samaritan *departed* on the morrow in pursuit of his own affairs; but, not satisfied with
 having

having brought the miserable being whom he had saved from death to a place where his wants might be supplied, he deposited a sum of money, suited either to his own moderate ability or to the probable wants of the sufferer, with an injunction to the host to take care of him; assuring him that if it should be necessary to incur more expence, it should be faithfully repaid. Any long comment on this instructive parable (which many have supposed to be a real history) is unnecessary. The prejudiced Jew learned by it, that the bond of neighbourly good-will and assistance was intended to comprize all mankind; and while it reproves the stony heart of apathy or avarice, to the remotest ages of the world, it will also *instruct* the soul of melting tenderness so to regulate its feelings, that one virtue shall not encroach upon another.

Gandour

Candour is a virtue closely allied to benevolence; and here also the humour of the times makes it rather necessary that we should define its restraints than encourage its unbounded exercise. It is most true, that every virtue is situated between two opposite vices, into one of which we are sure to fall the moment we exceed the limit of moderation. To define what that moderation is, we must take scripture for our guide; and here, as I before observed in points of doctrine, we are not to force a particular text into the service of a pre-conceived opinion or ruling passion; but by a faithful examination of the whole tenor of the sacred pages, endeavour with singleness of heart to discover how far our own belief and practice accords with the revealed will of God. As it is certainly contrary to the purposes of the Almighty, to confound the distinction of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, vice and

virtue, we are not required, in our manner of speaking of these opposite qualities, to *forget* that they are *distinct* and also *irreconcilable*. When we read or hear of monstrous crimes, the equivocal expressions of “we hope all is for the best,” or “what ever is is right,” do not imply candour, but imbecility, indifference, or even a latent prepossession in favour of what we ought to condemn in positive terms; unless we further explain our meaning to be, that we entirely rely on the secret counsels of that Divine Being, who makes even the stubborn wills and unruly desires of men advance the designs of his over-ruling Providence.

The soft extenuating tone which is often used when we describe the licentious vices, is as offensive to true candour, as it is to genuine purity. We may (nay, indeed, as Christians, we must) *pity* the slaves of sin; but then we must pity them as *slaves* and

and *sinners*. Apologies are for great offences not only undue lenity to offenders, but uncharitableness to innocence, whose danger (as it has been before observed) is thereby increased. I cannot, however, allot the praise of superior candour, or even *gentleness*, to those who thus profess themselves the excusers of vice. They are seldom unskilled in "taunting proverbs of reproach," which are bestowed with little mercy on all the venial errors of the friends of order, decorum, and religion, if not in the shape of personal invective, at least as an aggregate body. Abstract abuse is here very serviceable; bigotry, rigidity, formality, fastidiousness, and scrupulous punctilio, may, by that latitude of inverted meaning, which the new system of elocution permits, be converted into most powerful engines to batter down respect for all ancient institutions, and even for the laws of God, which

candour

candour (a heavenly emanation from the pure spirit of charity) may thus be made to destroy.

Is candour then to be totally banished in these cases? By no means. When we read a controversial work, or one that opposes our own principles, we must not strain the author's meaning by such inuendos and inferences as an impartial umpire would pronounce to be unfair, I do not say as the author would himself disclaim; for ingenuousness is not the characteristic of literary discussion; nor do they who are smitten with the wish of making converts always *discover* the yoke to which their pupils are to submit. Do not, without sufficient evidence, believe that a reasonable creature can coolly justify the horrid deeds which anarchy and atheism have recently committed; but if you perceive the leaven of democracy to work in the mass, a few condolatory exclamations

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at the sad extremes to which *good intentions* have been hurried by *opposition*, must not cheat your simplicity. And with respect to flagrant breaches in moral rectitude, your sentiments must principally be determined by the proofs on which the accusation rests. To detect slander is the province of candour; yet if the guilt be indisputable, you must not let the consideration of the beauty, sweetness, elegance, benevolence, or local situation of the offender, make you insensible of the enormity of the offence; for candour does not consist in mitigating crimes, but in distrusting their reality, or in hoping that the culprits retain some good properties which may ultimately lead them back to repentance.

Our chief opportunity for exercising candour is with the lesser errors and imperfections of our fellow-creatures, and especially of those with whom we are most
nearly

nearly connected. The allowances that we are called upon to make for human infirmity, whenever our minds become *painfully* impressed by a sense of ill usage, misconduct, unkindness, neglect, or severity, will be most properly considered under the head of sweetness of temper ; a quality which our male partners consider as so indispensably necessary to our sex, that they seldom will allow any other virtue, however pre-eminently excellent, to be an adequate substitute for this fundamental principle of female worth and utility.

I am one of those who think, that a predilection for unresisting sweetness may be urged to an extreme that is unfavourable to the virtue and happiness of both sexes. The primeval design of God in the creation of woman, that she should be the help-mate of man, certainly extended to his *spiritual* as well as *temporal* existence. If, from mixing less with the busy scenes
of

of active life, she be less capable of deciding with propriety in points wherein acuteness, penetration, and what is termed policy, are necessary, her principles, it must be granted, are for this reason less likely to be contaminated by collision of interest, and all the crooked machinations of over-reaching ambition. This subject might be best considered, when we come to that most intimate connexion with men, of which obedience forms our distinctive obligation. But as, with few exceptions, subservience is claimed from us by all our male relatives, it may not be improper to observe, that whenever they err, either in morals or principles, a *mild yet marked* disapprobation is not *pertinacity*, but *fortitude*. It is, perhaps, the most difficult instance which a really amiable woman can give of command of temper; since nothing can be more contrary to her feelings, than to find herself called upon by con-

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science to prefer contention to acquiescence, or constraint to cordial intercourse: You will readily suppose, that I am not claiming a licence to defend the vanities, the punctilios, or the distinctions, which weak or wayward women deem of so much importance, but for which the wise would never risk the blessing of domestic concord. I am supposing the occasion which gives rise to opposition to be really important, and to proceed from a sense of duty to a parent, justice to an injured sister, affection to an ill-treated child, attachment to a deserving friend, or a full conviction of the bad consequences of the errors that we wish to check. The less the question in dispute is connected with *self*, the less suspicious will be the contest; and as the *object* for which we contend should be evidently important, the *means* by which we endeavour to gain our point should be blameless.

blameless. Loud keen invective, known by the name of scolding, is not only wrong, but injudicious; for it is the surest means of defeating the purpose which it seeks to secure. Sullen moroseness is still worse; and tears of anger or disdain, affected indisposition, and every species of art and trick, though more generally successful than the straight forward method of the blunt virago, constitute, in the opinion of every ingenuous person, a far more detestable character.

I must here observe (though with some degree of apprehension, for I feel that I am treading on very tender ground, and tremble at the thought of leaguings every son of Adam against me in defence of their darling prerogative), that when men elevated smiling acquiescence into the first of female excellences, they indulged their humour at the expence of their understandings. This preference indicates a

consciousness that they themselves are *wayward children*, who require to be *soothed* and *flattered*, and not the *guardians* and *instructors* of the inferior sex; the slaves of their own passions, and not the “offspring” of heaven and earth, and all earth’s “lord.” Are a sycophant and a slave really more valuable than a monitor and a friend? They must not pretend to urge, that they need no monitor; for in that case they would be destitute of those capricious humours for which they claim indulgence, and which they say it is our chief duty and destination to attend to. Is not fidelity, I would ask, valuable; is not discretion a pearl above price, and pure affection a blessing which makes earth like heaven? And can she be faithful, discreet, or affectionate, who sees you totter on a precipice, or madly sport with your reputation, health, or fortune, and can yet preserve the smile of tranquillity, and forbear

bear to warn you of your danger? But I must stop this excursive expostulation; our present design, my dear Miss M——, is with the characters and duties of women; and as the latter often spring out of the faults of men, we should consider how we may best adapt our minds to our lot, rather than spend our time in uselessly lamenting that this “lot is not always cast in fair ground.”

The right (I should speak more correctly in saying the duty) of resistance, upon really important occasions, being admitted, and the exercise of it limited within the most exact bounds of prudence and ingenuousness, I must now observe, that as our relative situation causes us many trials from the coercion of our wills, and from opposition to our interests, we should be careful of adding to the number, by introducing domestic traitors into our own bosoms. For a very short period of our

R 3

lives,

lives, during the reign of youth and beauty, man affects to compliment us with an ostentatious show of pre-eminence; I should rather have said, *used to affect* to compliment us; for fashion has now almost annihilated our fantastic empire, by confining the attentions of gallantry to that part of our lives when they must either be unmeaning or criminal. Many (may I not say most?) of our sex, from their cradle to their grave, scarcely know the exercise of free will, either in the disposal of their time or their fortunes, in the choice of pleasures or pursuits, in the selection of friends or acquaintance, or even in determining the spot of earth on which they would reside. I am far from insinuating, or believing, that this dependant state is really a misfortune; I acquiesce in the sapient conclusion, that to a conscientious mind "Command is anxiety, and obedience ease;" yet as obedience is our lot, how

how ought we, from early youth, to cultivate the passive virtues ; how carefully should we restrain and check those stormy passions, irregular desires, and eager wishes, which will in our future lives prove to us like the stream which increased the consuming thirst of Tantalus ! Since there is little or no probability that we shall ever be permitted to set out in search of adventitious pleasures, at least not to select such as we fancy would be most gratifying to our taste, how careful should we be to make our own bosoms the seat of that peace which, as “the world cannot give,” so, most happily, “the world cannot take away !” I am not here recommending melancholy abstraction, or mortified indifference to sublunary things ; the disposition of mind that I would inculcate, is humble resignation and cheerful content. It is a rejoicing in the good that we possess, and a quiet surrender of our own wills ; which temper

results alike from a firm confidence in the goodness of God, a proper sense of our own unworthiness, and a just estimation of terrestrial objects, whether considered with respect to their value or duration, as they affect ourselves or our fellow-creatures. When sweetness of temper is thus founded upon principle, I will not suffer any *male* orator to be its more *devoted* panegyrist. It deserves every epithet of heavenly and angelical; for it is, indeed, the temper of angels, and the frame of mind which predominates among the blessed inhabitants of Heaven. Yet, notwithstanding this holy elevation of soul, and benign composedness of character, I must suppose it possible, that a woman thus endowed is not an *indifferent* spectator of the passing scene. She cannot meet the man, to whom she is linked by the tie of kindred or affection, with a gay good humour, when he is disguised by passion or deformed by vice.

Sincerity

Sincerity (I must repeat) is a prime ingredient in the character of real sweetness; and when pained affection forcibly wrings the heart, the smile of gentleness can but feebly break (not through the cloud of passion but) through the night of woe.

Little merit should be ascribed to that sort of animal good humour, which consists in being insensible to the finer feelings of morality. If we analyze this quality, we shall perceive that it is really nothing better than mere selfishness, which, provided no immediate ill affects itself, is willing (in the well-known phrase) to "let the world slide." I allow as little credit to that *exterior polish*, and ground down *smoothness* of deportment, which substitutes command of temper for real gentleness. The known predilection which men entertain for easy partners, has made many female hypocrites, and (especially in the second classes of society) has intro-

R 5

duced

duced an unvarying softness, a guarded acquiescence, a cautious equanimity of manner, as remote from real good temper; as the drawling sentimental whine by which it is accompanied is from true benevolence. A remarkably low tone of voice, and an unswerving quietness of manner, are the disguises which the conscious termagant would *naturally* assume, who, fearing her own vehemence, dares not permit her feelings the least indulgence in public; and atones for these occasional restrictions, by suffering the accumulated load of spleen to burst in a torrent on her near connexions or dependants. But as the easy elegance of the true woman of fashion, is very distinguishable from the overcharged finery of vulgar imitators, who endeavour to awe you into admiration of their costly attire; so a discerning eye will soon discriminate between the artless ease of real meekness,

meekness, and the guarded evenness of assumed gentleness. The consciousness of having nothing to disguise, will give an honest animation to the countenance of the former ; while every feature of the latter remains fixed in the icy coldness of frigid propriety ; for it dares not venture to indulge the honest blush of kindling sensibility, or the spontaneous exclamation of generous indignation. The whole deportment of the studied character will be so very right, as to be in reality wrong ; so very obliging, as never to oblige ; and so uniformly amiable, as to excite the distrust of all who give themselves time to reflect, that where so much care has been bestowed upon *manners*, the *inward* dispositions of the heart are likely to have remained unregulated. Yet so many resolute bashaw batchelors, skilled in the *theory* of connubial despotism, have surrendered at discretion to these piratical
R 6
shrews,

shrews, cruising under the false colours of unresisting sweetness; that I am persuaded, an inversion of the plot of the celebrated comedy of, "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife," would present a just resemblance of the *interior* œconomy of many families. I can only account for its non-introduction on the stage, at a time when novelty is so much required, by supposing that John Bull's high attachment to his own prerogative would not *patiently* permit an exhibition which would discover "the secrets of his *prison* house."

Having removed the seat of Gentleness from the features and manner to the heart, let us now attend to her conduct, and enumerate her attendant graces. She is nearly allied to Christian charity, or rather she is such a vital part of that celestial quality, that it cannot exist without her. In the eye of the world, her attention being diverted from herself, ingenuousness

genuofness often precedes confideration; but in the privacy of retirement, and amidst the narrow circle of domeftic duty, ſhe walks with circumscribed attention. She does not permit difdain, envy, pride, or malice, to intrude into the hallowed ſanctuary of her boſom. Shrinking from every tendency to tyranny, caprice, or petulance, ſhe conſiders the wants and errors of all with whom ſhe is connected; ſhe allows for human infirmities; and if her reſentment be roused by flagitious offences, ſhe remembers the apoſtolic precept, and *sins* not in her *anger*. She is particularly obſervant in her conduct to all who are in any way dependant upon her humour; and the claims of an inferior are in her eye ſacred. She cannot only endure, but obey, the waywardneſs of an aged friend; and ſhe can ſubmit without murmuring to the privations which miſtaken tenderneſs, or too officious care, unwarrantably impoſes.

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For patience is one of her handmaids, by whose instructions she not only sustains disappointments and vexations, but endures the still more difficult trial of personal suffering. This passive fortitude, so highly becoming to our sex, is generally found to exist in its highest perfection in the gentlest tempers and most delicate constitutions. Indeed, as it is the exact reverse of pride and selfishness, where should we look for it, but in the soil in which humility and benevolence generally abound. From whence proceed all the irreverent complaints against the dispensations of Providence? Who are they that are perpetually quarreling with their lot in this world, and who have always some story of extreme distress, or cruel usage, to weary the good-natured ear of those who long to blend reproof with pity? Are they not the selfish, the proud, and the envious? Have not their disappointments pro-

proceeded from an extravagant opinion of their own deserts; and may we not oftener trace the unkindness of which they complain, to a previous insensibility of the claims and expectations of others?

Contentedness is so genuine a feature of good temper, that, unless in cases of very peculiar distress, it rarely fails to be the predominant distinction of a placid well-disposed mind. It is unquestionably a branch of that charity which "seeketh not her own, and endureth all things;" but, unless it be the result of natural apathy and coldness of disposition, it assumes many more of those glorious epithets which discriminate the exalted character of the true Christian. A consciousness of our own unworthiness, leads us to consider every blessing that we enjoy as the undeserved favour of a liberal benefactor: and every pain that we endure and every privation that we feel, as the merciful correction of a wise

a wise

a wise parent and just master. Thus contentment becomes united with humility, resignation, and devout gratitude; and how truly proper are these sentiments to this fallible and militant state! Where, my dear young friend, shall we find the unhappy wretch who has no endowment of body, mind, fortune, or connexion, for which he is not, with respect to the Donor, an *insolvent* debtor? And where shall we meet with that unfulled virtue which does not require to be *perfected* through *affliction*.

There is a placid calm contentedness which is even practicable in severe suffering; but when our temporal affairs are prosperous, cheerfulness must be considered as a most agreeable addition to composure and placidity. Its attractions are so powerful, especially to the majority of men, that merely on prudential reasons, I would urgently advise every woman to
endeavour

endeavour to embellish home with this strong allurements. It is most certain, that the lords of the creation are in general less disposed to acquiesce in mortifications and uncomfortable sensations than women; their active natures prompt them to *subdue* difficulties, and to *fly* from troubles; and few men require a better excuse for a habit of dissipation, than that their own firesides presented nothing that was agreeable. To the mothers, sisters, or wives of young men, this admonition is especially seasonable. The words “a dull evening,” have a magnetic influence upon the impetuous passions and quick animal spirits of youth; and it is generally in the early period of life that those habits are formed, which determine man to be the domestic companion, or the bon vivant. I fear there are some natures so very irregular, that even the wit of a Seigné, or the elegant archness of a Montagu,

Montagu,

Montagu, would not detach them from the circling glass and its noisy merriment; but I wish such people to be left without excuse, and that the *deserted* female should never accuse herself, during the lonely hours of watchful solicitude, of having *bunted* her stray turtle from his nest with the scream of dissonance, or the hum of melancholy. I dwell more seriously on this subject, as I am convinced that many valuable women fall into this error, especially those who still belong to the diminishing order of domestic industrious housewives. The cross events that are continually occurring in the little monarchy of our own households, though individually petty and trivial, become important by accumulation, and teasing by frequency. One consideration should here be attended to; if we find that our attention to good management *materially* affects our temper or harasses our spirits,

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we may be assured that we are giving an undue weight to worldly concerns, and are pursuing a duty till we advance into the confines of error. A recollection of our motives for these exertions, and an estimation of the intrinsic value of all temporal things, will recal us within the prescribed limits of what is right. We cannot serve our family, if we make home *disgusting* to the members of which it consists; and we cannot be said to “set our affections on things above,” if we surrender our whole mind to the *encumbering* cares of Martha.

Nothing is more unjust than to confound cheerfulness with levity; their characteristics are essentially distinct. The one is perfectly independent, or at least requires nothing but the absence of pain, calamity, and ill-humour; the other can only live in a crowd, where it meets with the food on which it subsists, admiration
and

and amusement. Cheerfulness is self-amused; all nature, in its estimation, wears a smiling aspect; and it goes forth, like the child in the fable, inviting every object “to play with it,” and partake of its hilarity. Levity has smiles for its ball-dress, and tears for its dishabille. It is not unusual for cheerfulness to feel overpowered in a crowd, distracted by clamour, and fatigued by a succession of what are generally termed pleasures, which do not leave it leisure to commune with the agreeable inmate in its own bosom. The cheerful woman feels more satisfaction from describing gay scenes to a friendly circle, than from the absolute enjoyment of them. The dissipated female languishes at the recollection of past delights, and can only be said to live while she either participates in, or plans splendid amusements. She who can remain at home without imbibing melancholy or moroseness, who can contrive

rive diversions within the precincts of retirement, who never complains of ennui, and can at all times exert sufficient mental strength to throw a stone at the Goliath spleen*, gives sure indication of possessing that "peace of mind which passeth all understanding." But she who hurries from one crowd to another, and wastes in public that time which is the most precious of our entrusted talents, and those animal spirits which were given her to exhilarate the labours of social duty, discloses the mournful secret, that she is flying from a hated enemy, whose conversation is *insupportable* ; I mean, herself.

Beside the prudential value of cheerfulness, as it affects our connexions, or our own estimation with others, allow me to prescribe it as one of the best nostrums for the preservation of health. Cheerfulness,

* "Throw but a stone, the giant dies,"

Green's Poem on Spleen.

unless

unless incapacitated by some infirmity, is always active ; and the value of an agile body, and energetic mind, can only be estimated by those who have experienced an accidental suspension of those enjoyments. How much may the comforts, and indeed the animal uses, of food be augmented or diminished, by devoting the social meal to cheerful and instructive conversation, or by rendering it the chosen season of debate and complaint ! A hearty laugh after dinner, has been prescribed as a medicinal recipe to promote nutritive digestion ; and, thank God ! every family may occasionally enjoy the luxury of this *wholesome dessert*. Very little is necessary to compound it, supposing (as I before observed) the absence of severe pain or calamity. It is but endeavouring to be pleased ; it is only giving agreeable answers, and avoiding long mournful narratives of trivial distresses ; a style of conversation

versation more infectious than the influenza, and always sure of heaping up such a mountain of miseries, as the most sprightly disposition must sink under. I am not here endeavouring to banish improving and serious conversation ; for the latter, there are due times and stated seasons, in which mirth would be not only unbecoming, but criminal. I only want to exile those *unedifying* dolours, which make a party uncomfortable, they know not why, and morose instead of intelligent. It is a false idea, that improvement must speak in a tone of puritanical solemnity. Wit is a more useful ally to wisdom, than spleen ; and humour has vanquished many a foible, against which gravity remonstrated in vain.

But the bounds of cheerfulness must be defined ; it must never attempt to triumph over the sorrows of a dejected broken spirit ; for then it is no longer the child of bene-

benevolence, but of ostentation and malignity. When an effort to exhilarate would be unseasonable, it must gently try to amuse sorrow or to soothe despair. In its gayest sallies, it must ever preserve the sanctities of decorum; for it has no alliance with indelicacy, profaneness, malice, or slander. Its raillery should be the light tickling of a feather, not the excoriating lash of punishment. Desirous to please others, not solicitous to display itself; careless of admiration, playful, easy, and discreet; observant to stop the laugh when the jest is grown vapid, and to suspend the jest when the inclination to laugh is exhausted: in fine, always remembering the wise King of Israel's admonition, "that
 " there is a time to weep as well as a
 " time to laugh, a time to dance, and a
 " time to mourn."

I know no surer indication of a happy disposition, nor a more likely means to
 promote

promote the comfort of those around us, than the habit of attending to little observances, and avoiding petty contradictions. No minutiae are undeserving of serious consideration, which contribute to the peace and good-will of the little kingdom over which we exert viceregal dignity. Goldsmith proved his intimacy with human nature, when he made his engaging Dr. Primrose ascribe the harmony of his family to his strict enforcement of the laws of good-breeding. It was observed, by one who well knew how to appreciate the excellences of your revered mother, that she possessed the amiable and singular quality of “never disappointing any one by her replies.” It was not meant by this, that she never refused an improper request, nor checked an impertinent observation; but that her answers were always such as the *reconsideration* of the party to whom they were addressed

dressed could not fail to approve. Those who have observed, how often the happiness of a party is interrupted by an untoward or contradictory answer, will rightly value this happy suitability. But I am wandering from the quality of good-temper, to that outward expression of it which properly belongs to another department.

Amusement and occupation are so necessary, in order to preserve our minds in a happy contented state, that idleness is ever rightly denominated the parent of spleen, ill-humour, and caprice. To answer the desirable ends of employment, it is necessary that our pursuits, whether of business or pleasure, should be innocent. Nor is it an improper restriction (at least to the generality of my sex) to add that they should be unexpensive, as well as rational. Some species of employment is essential to every station; but in amusement

ment (after duty has determined the portion of time that it should claim) taste may be allowed in *some degree* to make the selection; I say in *some degree*; for our connexion with, and dependance upon, the other sex, will seldom allow us to be *sovereign*, even in the choice of our *rattles*.

Two cautions may here be useful to the younger part of my sex. In the first place, let them avoid acquiring a taste for expensive amusements; their fortunes and expectations must be the rule by which they are to determine what they are to call so; recollecting also, that oeconomy should be more rigidly exercised in the department of bagatelles. Drawing and music, though most pleasing accomplishments and agreeable methods of employing leisure, may be so far pursued, as to prove a serious consumption of time and fortune. Gardening, if suffered to deviate into an artificial taste for what is cu-

trious, and tender, is liable to the same objection. Indeed, like many other overstrained propensities, it ceases to be what nature designed it, one of our most simple, rational, healthful, and innocent enjoyments; and assumes the shape of those fastidious vanities, which luxury has introduced to supplant genuine delight. Taste may be gratified and displayed in the disposition of a rosarie, as well as in an orangerie; and “Nerina’s woodbine bower,” or even a cottage garden, with its clipped hedge and almost spontaneous flowers, often comprize as many beauties, though not so many cares and disappointments, as the stately conservatory, or the shaded parterre stored with the “pride of Ganges.”

I can scarcely tear myself from a subject which has afforded me so many hours of amusement and days of health. It is fortunate that I have enough self-command

to avoid reminding you, that gardening was the employment of Paradise, or quoting all that our best poets have said on this enchanting theme. I must, however stop to say, that that sorrow must indeed be of a desperate nature, which can resist the soft allurements of " vernal delight." Nature reviving from the sleep of winter, flourishing in plants, blossoming in flowers, and productive in fruits, exhibits an aspect of cheerfulness which no well-regulated mind can fail to enjoy, unless heavily laden with the burden of recent misery.

We will *chat* hereafter about those studies which may agreeably and usefully fill up the intervals of avocation; but having somewhat prematurely introduced the topic of amusement as influencing temper, it would be considered as an unpardonable negligence to omit mentioning cards. I hear you object, that I shall ar-

range them improperly under that head; cards being now really a science and a labour, if not a duty. As an amusement, I am inclined to treat cards with lenity; but then they must be confined within the limits of recreation. They must not consume much time; they must be enjoyed at a small expence; and they must *exbilarate* the mind, not *oppress* and *agitate* the temper. Cards, when accompanied by vivacity and good humour, often afford relief to flagging conversation; and, especially in the decline of life, they offer a happy interruption to that listlessness which is apt to overcloud the spirits, a sure attendant on decaying faculties and fatigued attention. But in this point, as in most others, refinement has banished comfort. The social but small party, with all its friendliness, ease, and hilarity, no longer possesses any attraction; and if compassion still plead in behalf of some decrepit

decrepit invalid, so far as to induce the votaries of pleasure to employ a disengaged evening in diverting the pains of infirmity, the severe penance is ranked among those works of supererogation, the merits of which may be drawn upon to commute for former sins. Yet in this crowded rout, with all its brilliant lights, elegant refreshments, whispering beaux, and fashionable habiliments, the heart-felt gaiety which our ancestors enjoyed at five-card loo, or one-and-thirty, are utterly unknown.

The dreadful vice of gaming must here be mentioned, as the most certain corroder of the temper, as well as the destroyer of every beauty, delicacy, or grace, that is usually ascribed to women. Let us imagine the contracted heart of a miser, joined to the countenance of a fury; let us unite inordinate covetousness, with rage, envy, terror, and despair; behold dependence

dance and helplessness on the one hand, on the other impending ruin and infamy, from which the wretched victim has no resource but death. And can it be wondered at, that she who has dared to sport with the reputation and fortune of her family, should stake the interests of that hereafter, of which perhaps she has heard little, and meditated less, as madly as she has risked those temporal enjoyments to which her covetous and selfish heart was attached with such destructive idolatry? A female gamester, like a female deist, sins against all those moral restraints which general opinion, education, and custom, had placed around her sex, as well as against the natural feelings of her heart. Instead of delicacy, timidity, and generosity, she becomes confident, bold, and mean; avarice and chicanery usurp the place of liberality and ingenuousness. Peace will never more enter into her bosom;

bosom; and if placidity dwell upon her lips, it will be but the *meretricious* smile of dissimulation, “the painted sepulchre,” that covers the most humiliating vestige of degraded mortality.

There needs little rhetoric to prove, that all criminal pursuits and violent passions must be destructive of real good-humour; because sweetness of temper can only subsist with a conscience satisfied with its general conduct. It will be a more difficult task to persuade my young readers, that the very sensibility which renders good-humour so attractive, if indulged beyond its proper bound, infallibly destroys its charming associate. Yet, as this finely-tempered human machine is so constituted, that a redundance of any vital secretion begets disease; so in the moral world, vice treads so close upon the heels of virtue, that you cannot open the door to one, without danger of admitting the other.

other. Hence the utility of constant watchfulness; hence the necessity of frequent application to Heaven for its directing and restraining grace; and in no point is divine assistance more necessary, than in the warfare which is continually kept up between our *feelings* and our *judgment*. If we renounce the former, we become a disgusting lump of apathy; if the latter, a whirlpool of confusion.

There is no circumstance by which the keen sensations of virtuous sensibility are more agonizingly distended, than by the misconduct of near and dear connections. I think this is such a hard trial of temper, that mere human complacence must shrink from the conflict. With God, however, all things are possible. The only earthly means of rendering such an affliction supportable is, to behave to all around us with such a conscientious observance of duty, and to preserve such a
 purity

purity of conduct, that we may truly say,
 “neither through neglect nor evil ex-
 ample have I brought on this misery.”
 When to this consolatory self-reflection we
 add our prayers to Heaven for the re-
 formation of the sinner, wisdom directs
 that we should as much as possible with-
 draw our attention from the painful object;
 and (if justice and propriety ascertain the
 suitability of such conduct) endeavour to
 bestow our misplaced affections on a more
 deserving person. This, I grant, cannot
 and ought not always to be done; but
 when it is impracticable, and the cord
 that binds us to the offender is drawn
closer in proportion as it *cuts* deeper; still
 let us reflect, that it is the memento of
 one never-failing Friend, who, by shewing
 us the painful nature of all worldly de-
 pendence, endeavours to attach us closer
 to himself.

The like consolatory reflections may be

extended to the other trials of virtuous feeling ; I mean the loss of health, of fortune, or of friends. When sorrow appears as the immediate infliction of Providence, a well-disposed mind will find less difficulty in submission ; and, however agonizing it may be to the feelings of self-love, it certainly does not wear such an alarming aspect with respect to futurity ; as the Christian believer must discern, when she contemplates the conduct of some dear but hardened sinner, whom she can neither *renounce* nor *reclaim*. Examples, however, have not been wanting, of those who, while they were ever ready with most lively compassion to interest themselves in the sorrows of others, have endured the pangs of “their own distress,” with magnanimous fortitude. This triumph of benevolence and resignation, over native tenderness and self-love, is one of the most exalted perfections to which

which women can aspire. It may be useful to suggest to all who are called to this hard duty, that though complaint *wearies* friends, it does not *diminish* suffering. When we offer a sacrifice to God, let us endeavour to make it perfect. If he call upon us to surrender our *comforts*, let us lay our *regrets* also on his altar. Alas! while I pen this admonition, how forcibly does my rebel heart remind me, that it is easier to *preach* than to *perform*.

But sensibility oftener suffers from trials of its own creating, than from the corrections of Heaven. The praise which the imitators of Sterne bestowed on acute feeling, gave our sex a fantastical irritability of mind, which was every thing but amiable and meritorious. Some few years ago, our souls were harrowed up by pathetic narratives of the sufferings of hares, partridges, fishes, horses, and reptiles; and man was abused for tyranny, in destroying

destroying his fellow-animals, and for gluttony in devouring the *joint* tenants of this sublunary sphere. At last, some sapient discoverer perceived that many of these much-pitied beings actually subsisted by destroying some other species; and then the benevolent feelings of many good children were exercised in rescuing "captive mice," and "benetted flies," at the hazard of starving *cats* and *spiders*. The German school, especially the illuminized Bishop of Saxe Weimar*, refined upon this system, till there was manifest danger not only of our becoming a nation of Bramins, but that *eating would be cried down* as an act of cruelty; since it is impossible to cultivate the ground, or to produce vegetables, without annihilating many harmless worms, destroying colonies of industrious ants, or crushing a sacred deposit of minute caterpillars, who would in time

* Herder.

expand

expand into beautiful butterflies. As I do not profess myself one of those abstracted Fakirs, who would willingly resign our sublunary empire to gnats and cockchafers, I must rejoice in the popularity of such a work as “Natural Theology;” in which the ridiculous refinements of extreme susceptibility are admirably corrected, by those just sentiments which an enlarged mind is sure to inculcate after it has contemplated the *whole works of God*.

Among the false glosses by which sensibility deceives and corrodes the heart in which it is suffered to have too great influence, I wish to mention the exaggeration of trifles, or the giving of too much weight to things really important. Many an amiable heart is at this moment bleeding under the wounds which unkindness, neglect, and cruelty, are supposed to have inflicted. The wounds are real, but the inflictors of them are imaginary, or rather
it

it was mistake, inadvertence, or absence of mind, which shot a few *random* darts, as they were running after some other object. Women cannot too deeply imprint upon their minds the connubial counsels of Desdemona; "Men," Heaven knows, "are but men;" I much doubt whether even women are really angels. The lords of the creation are apt to have their "tempers puddled," and they are more inclined to *require* than to "*shew* observance." Certainly they are often guiltless of the wrong which susceptibility so deeply laments; and as often heartily desirous of repairing the undesigned injury, if they can do it without derogating from their own dignity. Yet let our sex beware of taxing the generous warmth of affection, by imposing upon it the hard duty of unpleasant acknowledgment. Rather let us set about the practicable task of strengthening our own weakness. Assuredly,

uredly, the intended reproof or avowed displeasure of a parent or a husband should never be disregarded; even their *undeserved* retulance should be watched, soothed, and diverted; and as assuredly we should beware of exercising our imaginations at the expence of our repose, in searching for *slights, taunts, and neglects*, which exist only in our *own* perturbed spirits.

As extreme sensibility, whether it act in the shape of over-strained benevolence or keen susceptibility, is destructive of equanimity of mind; so meekness and fortitude are the faithful guardians of sweetness and tranquillity. No virtues are more requisite to our sex, and it behoves every mother to impress them upon the minds of her daughters. A passionate woman is but like a wasp in a glass phial; her frenzy and her impotence can only excite disgust and ridicule. The physical strength of man, as well as his political situation, gives
dignity

dignity to his resentment ; but we can only stamp and rave ; our little powers will be soon exhausted, and we must sink into an abject depression, proportioned to our vain attempt to swell into undue consequence. Aware of the impossibility of vanquishing by violence, many women have attempted to found their empire upon their weakness ; and thus originated a numerous groupe of *exquisite* creatures, who placed their consequence on their being really *good for nothing*, either as friends, companions, helpmates, or handmaids. They seemed indeed of less intrinsic value than the painted blocks on which the priestesses of fashion display their votive garlands ; since, though, like the race I am speaking of, these dolls can neither *walk* nor *work*, they really can *stand*, and are not *mischievous*. I rejoice that the revolutions of fashion have decreed uselessness to be *outré*, or at least a flimsy

a flimsy appendage to that second-rate gentility which is no gentility at all. Strength of mind, and bodily agility, are now considered as elegant requisites to the female character; and a woman of high ton at least *pretends* to be equal to the *labours* of Hercules, or the *mental* exertions of Locke. As I am a staunch advocate for all the rights of my sex, I wish our claims to activity and fortitude really might be permitted to stand upon a more permanent basis than *whim*. I wish that, instead of “daring to do every thing because we dare,” it were made an established law to *dare* to do all we *ought*. I feel hurt at any attentions from men, which indicate affected weakness in us. If a man help to carve our food, or fetch us a chair, with an air that seems to say, “these *poor* creatures cannot assist themselves,” the attention is mortifying; but if he do this with a view of obliging his coheiress of immortality,

immortality, we ought to repay the modern Amadis with our best curtesy. But it is absurd to talk of manners that are only preserved among a few antiquated students of Sir Charles Grandison ; and I perceive that I am bewildered in the labyrinth of digression. To return to those mincing “ minaudieres,” who found their importance on being able to “ jig, lisp, amble, and nick-name God’s creatures,” I exclude these something nothings from all pretension to gentleness ; for though they claim that distinction, because they are always in temper, we must never confound the qualities of the *bee* and the *butterfly*. Gentleness and sweetness are the offspring of inward peace of mind ; and can those possess them, who are only excused from the torment of reproach by being utterly void of reflection ?

I will mention but one more circumstance, which is injurious alike to temper
and

and character ; I mean the permitting any *single* circumstance or desire to impress the fancy. Dissipation has many temptations ; but it is a great folly to suppose, that retirement is free from them, or that by sincerely persevering in a course of duty we are safe from the attacks of our ghostly enemy. It was well imagined by an old writer*, that *one* sleeping devil was sufficient to secure the allegiance of a riotous disorderly town, while a *legion* of ~~active~~ mischievous infernals were necessary to vanquish a convent full of pious monks. We have scripture authority for believing, that when we are best employed Satan is most active. A garden and a wilderness were the scenes of the most memorable temptations that ever were recorded. To apply this truth to our present subject : as

* Sir P. Herbert, in his Conceptions to his Son, It is a part of the story on which Parnel founded his Hermit,

solitude

solitude engenders strong passions, so a lively desire of doing right is apt to infuse a wish for requiring some *peculiar* excellence. Let us beware of nourishing a hope of being distinguished by any particular virtue or grace, however excellent or estimable. By giving up our time to the pursuit of any one accomplishment or study, there is reason to suppose that we may be an amateur in something, and a fool in every thing else; but in morals there is great danger of over-shooting the mark, and missing what we risked all to obtain. She who aims at praise for her piety will run great hazard of being only a devotee. She who wishes to be thought remarkable for oeconomy and housewifery, will most likely be a vixen and a drudge. Those who are ambitious to be thought very good-humoured and pleasant, are apt to prove criminally compliant, or offensively loquacious.

cions. As one idea taking possession of the imagination is the general forerunner of insanity, or melancholy; so fixing our desires on one species of excellence is the sure stimulant of *error*; possibly also the precursor of depravity.

Providence has provided for all our moral diseases. The love of praise is deeply imprinted on the human mind; and I believe the softer texture of our souls makes us peculiarly susceptible of its influence. This susceptibility, which, under the guidance of merely human motives, betrays us to all the littlenesses of vanity, idle fear, and false shame, is yet capable of a most exalted direction. Only let us substitute the praise of God for the praise of men, and look to our own consciences for a satisfaction which public acclamations cannot bestow; and, unless our judgements are warped by false principles, we are safe. If with “singleness of heart we do our
“ duty

“ duty as to the Lord, and not unto
 “ men ;” not absolutely *indifferent* to the
 opinions of our fellow-creatures, but far
 from proposing their applause as the *re-
 ward*, or their judgement as the *criterion*
 of our actions ; we may rest assured, that
 our backslidings will not be numerous or
 irretrievable. No *one* virtue will mount
 us heavenward, if it be counterpoised by
 the weight of *opposite* offences.

Though I have been very diffuse on the
 subject of female graces, I must not omit
 to mention their crowning gem ; I mean,
 piety. But as, like the sun in the firma-
 ment, it diffuses its splendour over the
 whole moral world, and pervades every
 good action, every well-seasoned expres-
 sion, every chastened thought, I need not
 separately enlarge on this point. On the
 principles on which it should be founded,
 we have already largely descanted ; the
 duty and advantages of devout exercises,
 and

and habitual recollections of the Almighty, will give rise to a few brief observations, with which I shall conclude this epistle.

Since no situation in life is exempted from the infliction of death or calamity, our absolute dependance upon the Ruler of the Universe should excite in every mind, not an occasional and stated, but a constant and uniform remembrance of Him "in whom we live, move, and have our being." The still more important views which revelation discloses, the certainty of future judgement, and the knowledge that neither rank, wealth, talents, nor beauty, can avail us at the awful audit, added to the lively consciousness of our weakness and infirmity, of which Scripture has *told* us the *origin*, and we *feel* the *effects* in ourselves, strengthen this obligation. To weak, helpless, and frail womanhood, it becomes the only staff of sure de-

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pendance, whereon we can safely lean during our earthly pilgrimage.

So congenial are the sentiments of piety to our sex, that even a life of dissipation can hardly eradicate them. Sterne tells us, that French women regularly pass through the stated gradations of Beauties, Belles Esprits, and Devotees. I trust the intermediate class, who distinguish themselves by ridiculing that religion at which they soon after tremble, is not *numerous* in England. Yet I fear too many of us may be justly reckoned under the opposite banners of *indifferents* and *enthusiasts*, who must be equally strangers to the comforts of true devotion, and to the principles of sound piety. But we have in the preceding pages lamented this criminal negligence of the "pearl of price," and this infusion of the "bitter leaven" of moroseness into the bread of life.

I think,

I think, however, that in those animadversions I did not sufficiently explain an error which fanaticism has introduced into devotion. The doctrine that Christ has done all for us, is apt to engender in a weak and impassioned mind a sort of amatory attachment, so very different from the lowly, awful, and restrained affection, which the character of our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier, ought to inspire, that addresses composed for the purpose of expressing this affection are not only apt to be irreverent, but to favour of blasphemy. The terms celestial Bridegroom, or Spouse of the Soul, become dangerous when lowered to individual application. But such expressions as, "Thou absent love, thou dear unknown, " thou fairest of ten thousand fairs," are fitter for a song than a hymn, and are more suited to express carnal passion than a desire for spiritual communion. It would

be easy to quote epithets and descriptions from some admired Calvinistical compositions, which far outgo the utmost warranty of Scripture, even if we pervert the prophetical allegories of Eastern poetry, by degrading them from the general communion of Christ with all his faithful followers, to the particular feelings of one impassioned soul.

The standard which our blessed Lord prescribed as the pattern for devotion*, is so directly opposite to these amatory addresses, that we may with confidence assert that they cannot be pleasing to a pure and spiritual God. From the examples which holy writ records of the prayers of devout men in past ages, we may learn, that good sense, perspicuity, diffidence, humility, and spirituality of sentiment

* Some fanatics in low life have affirmed, that the Lord's Prayer is not worth using, and that they are *above* the Commandments.

have

have constantly characterized the favoured petitions of man to Heaven. Our liturgy is framed in this spirit ; let the same predominate in the compositions which you select for your *closet* exercises. It is not necessary, in order to your prayers being heard, that you should work up your feelings to *fervid* ebullition. *Intenseness* of thought, and *sincerity* of purpose, are the human means of making those requests heard at the throne of grace, which are offered with faith in the great Intercessor.

Rational piety is our best defence against the temptations of the world. You well know, that piety should not be confined to the church or the closet. When genuine, she is our *constant* companion ; spiritualizing every event, influencing all our actions, seasoning our ordinary conversation, and lifting our souls in frequent ejaculations above this transitory world, to hold communion with that which is

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eternal.

eternal. It is piety which must sanctify chastity, or we shall only be discreet from fear, "not pure in heart." She must direct the alms of benevolence, or liberality will stop short of the blessedness of charity. Candour is only caution without her; and sweetness of temper, a mere animal propensity. May this sacred plant continue to increase and flourish in your soul, till it ripens into the fruit of immortality, prays your truly affectionate friend, &c.

LETTER

LETTER X.

On Female Employments and Studies.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

WE have considered employment as necessary to preserve our minds in that happy state of equilibrium which is essential to good humour; but we might have taken a more enlarged and formidable view of idleness, and described her effect upon the *extremes* of society, where she appears as the close ally of dissipation and profligacy. For, as perfect inactivity is repugnant to our natures, vice and mischief alike spring from the source of indolence; and when we are not occupied in doing what is right,

our frail natures continually urge us to do what is wrong.

With respect to employment, women are more happily circumstanced than the other sex; the important and fatiguing avocations of men necessarily impose seasons of inactivity; and, unless among those of a literary turn, there are many hours in a day which a man scarcely knows how to occupy. That useful implement the needle, which is no interruption to conversation, which does not absolutely chain down attention, and fatigues neither the body nor the mind, is *our* constant preservative from lassitude; at the same time that in the majority of families it is an invaluable ally to œconomy, neatness, and elegance. I do acknowledge, that sometimes, when it gets into the hands of a pretty trifler, its productions deserve no better name than laborious idleness; but the thorough housewife would not exchange

change it for the cestus of Venus; and she knows how to make it as powerful a talisman, to preserve conjugal esteem and domestic order.

I think the goddesses all excelled in the arts of female industry, except the hoyden Diana; and you know she *always* continued a *spinster*. The heroines of old time shone at the loom and the distaff, and were so passionately attached to these occupations, that it is even recorded they *sighed* at being called from them to look at *martial beaux**. The history of the fair Nausicaa proves, that the operation of washing clothes was not only venerable and salutary, but really *dignified*. The Goddess of Wisdom descends from Olympus to order a Princess to superintend the suds; and gives as the ostensible reason, that such

* See the behaviour of Helen, in the third Iliad, when summoned by Iris to the Trojan walls.

a housewifely occupation would *expedite the time of her nuptials*. I recommend this book of the *Odyssey* to our treble-refined second-rate elegantes, who consider laundress as a more reproachful name than courtesan; reminding them at the same time, that the "Father of verse" and first of mortal bards has immortalized that employment, which they call servile and degrading; a convincing proof, that only false taste will consider that to be contemptible which is useful. The most distinguished women of our own country have handed down their names to posterity, by excelling in works of taste and ingenuity. But we need not search old annals to describe the tapestry and embroidery of our Matildas and Marys; industry and taste still claim an intimate alliance with royalty; and where they cannot excite emulation, at least rouse commendable, though humble imitation.

I feel

I feel great pleasure in the expectation, that *doing* nothing will speedily be as vulgar and gothic as *being* nothing; and that those to whom useful employment is a positive duty, will be obliged to have recourse to it in order to be thought genteel. In one particular, I think the legislature might interfere with advantage to female industry. I am not going to propose so bold a measure, as that summer bathing-places should be made *inaccessible* to all but *real* invalids; or that no lady should spend her mornings in shopping, but those who really want to make purchases. The regulation that I wish to propose relates to my own sisterhood. Suppose no woman should be permitted to publish an essay on industry, till she can produce a written certificate that her own wardrobe is kept in perfect order; or to *dress* out fictitious characters, unless she can prove (like the good wife in the

T 6 Proverbs)

Proverbs) that she has *clothed* her household with the labour of her hands. Some advantages would certainly result from such an ordinance ; the *readers* of small wares might hope to keep pace with the *writers* ; and the price of paper would be diminished by the press being only occupied with such works as are not the labours of idleness.

But, except in the inferior classes of society, female industry is not compelled to constant diligence in mechanical employment. We are designed to be the companions as well as the help-mates of man ; and it is as much our duty to render ourselves conversable and agreeable, by enlightening our minds, as it is to superintend our households, and to endeavour by our personal exertions to conduct every thing with frugality and propriety. As the age seems disposed to pay at least *sufficient* regard to what are called accomplishments,

plishments, some detached observations on female studies shall form the subject of this letter.

When a competent stock of religious knowledge has been acquired in early life, we may safely turn our minds from the word to the works of God ; but I must especially press it upon mothers, that such theological information as may insure stability of principle, should precede all but an elementary acquaintance with the sciences*. Much injury, I am persuaded, has been done by pursuing the contrary order of instruction ; for knowledge is extremely apt to puff up the mind of young students, who are soon satisfied with their own acquirements. Many have been thus taught to rest in second causes, and many have been confused by such an erroneous application of abstract terms, as ascribes

* See Letter 5th, where this subject is more largely treated.

almost

almost divine powers to the passive instruments of the Almighty. When we have learned to distinguish between the Creator and the created ; when we have obtained sufficient knowledge of the limits of human understanding, to beware of pushing our enquiries into those regions of obscurity, where reigns the “ God who hideth himself ;” when our faith is too firmly built to be shaken by those difficulties and objections which lurk at the threshold of science, and prove dangerous stumbling-blocks to precipitation and self-conceit, then, and not till then, we may attempt to become philosophers ; for the fruit of the tree of knowledge must not be gathered in preference to the fruit of the tree of life.

Great caution should be used in the selection of authors from whom we receive scientific instruction. French writers have generally a pleasant method of conveying information ;

information; but many of their works (as also several popular German productions of this kind) are so tinctured with deism, as to be *unsafe* preceptors; especially to inexperience, which is ever more apt to be charmed by wit and elegance; than attentive to argumentative deductions. My knowledge of the sciences is by much too limited to permit me to state what books would be most proper for tyros. I would only advise the young student to make soundness of principle an essential requisite in inquiries of this sort; and never to venture on the perusal of a deistical author (however celebrated), unless she be *guided* in her studies by some judicious friend, who will point out the objectionable passages, and detect the fallacies which they are intended to support.

I have already observed, that profound or abstruse learning does not seem so well suited to our sex as ethics and the belles lettres;

lettres ; because the length of time and abstraction of mind that the former require, are generally incompatible with our duties in life, which, though comparatively less important than those of men, are hourly recurring. Many women, however, are exempted by situation from these obligations ; and when leisure and inclination are united to ability, there can be no reasonable objection to our employing our talents in such researches as must, when properly directed, promote the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures. Natural history*, experimental philosophy, botany, and astronomy, open a delightful field of instructive entertainment to every

* The delicate and compassionate female need not be cautioned against disgusting or cruel experiments. She will not be required to perform surgical operations, which can alone warrant those exposures of the human form divine, or those wanton tortures of animals, which are excusable on no other ground.

young

young woman ; and if pursued with propriety and discretion, cannot fail to furnish them with many agreeable ideas to solace the winter of life, when our infirmities in a great measure seclude us from society, and the falling away of our dear connexions compels us to depend on self-amusement. A temperate pursuit of these sciences will also be of great service in quickening our observation, or rather in diverting it from frivolous objects, and in forming habits of close attention and argumentative deduction ; qualities in which women are supposed to be defective. But I must also add, that intense study is apt to engender querulous irritability, and all that train of evils which attend on nervous affections ; and if the more vigorous strength, more capacious intellect, and more solid judgement of man cannot resist these effects, what may we not expect will be the result, when the infirmities of
nature

nature are added to the infirmities of recondite abstraction? Men of profound science generally acquire some unpleasant habits; and the ridicule attached to their foibles is not entirely obviated by the consideration of the utility of their labours, or the *necessity* for their prosecuting them with *avidity*. As custom has not taught us to expect such advantages from the philosophical researches of women, we seem to have a less just defence from raillery when we overstrain them. The learned lady, in Roderic Random, is a more amusing caricature than Madam D'Arblay's Dr. Orkbone; and the reason is, that she appears more out of her sphere and latitude, and, like the bear in a boat, encountering an element on which she had no business to embark. When a woman *sets up* for the *distinction* of scientific, she at least shews that she has vanquished those wise sensibilities of her sex, which
mad

made her peculiarly susceptible of the shafts of satire.

Will you suspect my peculiar taste gives a bias to my judgment, if I determine that history, and those species of composition which have been distinguished by the name of British classics, constitute the species of study that is most suitable to the capacity, situation, and disposition of women? Precluded from taking an actual view of human nature as it is exhibited in the different walks of life, it is yet highly necessary that we should know the beings with whom we are destined to sojourn. History, and those agreeably instructive essayists who form an almost unique class in our national literature, mutually illustrate the respective pages which teach us what man *is* in private life, and how he *has* acted as an aggregate body. In the historical record, it is delightful to observe how the individual nature of man

has

has been modified by external circumstances, and how the same train of political causes uniformly produces similar events, varied in circumstances, but corresponding in result. From tracing the progress of society through the gradations of barbarism, improvement, civilization, refinement, luxury, degradation, corruption, and decay; we turn with delight to those powerful moralists who develop the minute springs of action, and endeavour to restrain those bosom traitors who sap the foundation of private virtue, and prove more destructive to states and empires than legions of enemies; and we rise from the perusal with a virtuous determination not to accelerate the ruin of our country, either by increasing the fatal preponderance of national guilt, or the burden of collective weakness.

“ Among those fundry advantages,” says the learned and intelligent Howell, “ which accrue to a reader of history, one
“ is,

is, that no modern accident can seem
 strange to him. He will leave off won-
 dering at any thing, in regard he may
 remember to have heard of the same,
 or much the same event, which hath
 happened in former times ; therefore he
 doth not stand staring like a child at
 an unusual spectacle, like that simple
 American who, the first time he saw a
 Spaniard on horseback, thought the
 man and the beast to be but one crea-
 ture. Now indeed, not to be an histo-
 rian, that is, not to know what foreign
 nations and our forefathers did, is still
 to be a child who gazeth at every
 thing ; whence may be inferred that
 there is no knowledge which ripeneth
 judgement and puts one out of his
 nonage, sooner than history." The pe-
 culiar applicability of these observations to
 the alarming and eventful times in which
 we live, is too obvious to need discussion.
 If,

If, as is generally allowed, judgement be the point wherein women are most defective, the advantage of historical reading, to our sex, is at once decided. But as information and utility should always precede amusement, I must request the young student to sit down to the venerable folio, or thick octavo, rather with a determination to be *entertained* by *instruction*, than to apply to *instruction* for the mere purpose of *entertainment*; she should therefore be taught to prefer digested details of facts, to bundles of anecdotes. The rage for numerous acquisitions, which has unhappily superseded a desire of *solid attainments*, has given popularity to writers of memoirs and detailers of bon mots, to the great disadvantage of grave narrators. Events dressed up in the style of romance partake too much of fiction to be instructive; and the historians should be too much devoted to the service of truth, to step out
of

of his road for any embellishment foreign to his great design. Court gallantries are as uninformative as the memoirs of courtezans, and probably as exaggerated, if not as spurious. Readers who confine their knowledge of past times to these faint sketches, may become *good gossips*, but can never be *historians*.

Biography is a branch of history, and in skilful and ingenious hands becomes a source of elegant and instructive entertainment. I lament that public curiosity should have stimulated this very agreeable species of literature into the confines of tittle tattle; or that private affection should have adorned it with the too vivid colours of eulogy. No sooner does a distinguished writer take his flight to the world of spirits, but approbation swells into admiration; every defect in his moral or literary reputation is for the moment obliterated, and not only do his previous

notes

notes seem sweeter, but every ear is turned to catch the unknown strains of the departed Swan, and to learn every particular of a character on which death has set its seal. Friendship readily prepares, not merely his *requiem*, but his *apothecosis*. Vices are either passed in silence, or so dressed and painted, that an illicit attachment, or a notorious error, has a chance of becoming the seraphic flame of Platonic love, or the ingenuous devotion of a strong mind to truth. We might allow some palliation of infirmity, or some exaggeration of excellence, to the wounded feelings of bereaved affection, agonized by a recent loss ; but such impositions on public principle are often too audacious to pass unchastised. Even the genius and stern virtue of a Milton, should not be permitted to sanction his defence of what the express words of our Saviour positively for-

-forbids*; nor should the romantic, but unquestionably pure affection of the devout bard of Vacluse, be produced as an allowable parallel for the equivocal Laura of a deistical voluptuary.

Can the cause of morals or of just taste be benefited by that very minute research into the ashes of the dead, which now constitutes the ton of reading? Human nature is never free from errors or weaknesses; and a benefactor of the public (which every good writer certainly is) deserves better than to have all his lesser peccadillos exhibited to the triumphant gaze of literary eves-droppers. No one who enters on the thorny maze of lettered life can hope to escape enemies; how precious to such is every petty detail, which, in reality, only proves that the author was a *frail* as well as a *mortal* being!

* On the subject of divorce, see Matt. 5th chap. 32d verse.

Even the utility of their labours is diminished, by thus raking into the private characters of those who have deserved renown as public instructors. Steele was elegant as a writer, and persuasive as a moralist. True ; but Steele acted by other laws than those which he enforced ; for he was a debauchee and a spendthrift. Will those who know this be equally convinced by his arguments, or restrained by his satire ? Johnson was a sloven, a dogmatist, and a voracious eater, uncouth in his person, and displeasing in his manners. Had we only known him from his literary remains, we should have pronounced him a gentleman, a sage, and a saint.

And shall we then make no enquiries after those whose voice was once heard in all lands, when they are laid cold and silent in the dark house of their forefathers ? Shall no memorial be placed upon their graves, but what their own genius raised
during

during their lives? None, perhaps, can be equally appropriate; but if we allow friendship or literary attachment to bring an offering, let the garland be chaste and dignified. Let not an irreverent hand heedlessly tear away that sacred veil, which should cover the failings as well as the ruins of mortality. But if their errors were so interwoven with their history that they must be mentioned, or if the good of the living stimulates you to disregard the privacy of the grave, *beware*, as you value your own immortal soul, or would avoid being responsible for the seduction of thousands whom your false glosses may vitiate, beware of giving to what is *wrong* the disguise of *merit*. Call not impiety by the name of singularity; ascribe not the praise of liberality to licentiousness. Let not a traducer of the word of God be recorded as its zealous illustrator; and never call an apostle of sedition a peace-
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able

able and valuable subject. If you narrate the actions of a Tom Paine or a Jonathan Wild, do not copy their mental portraits from a Walsingham or a Crichton. The life of a bad man may be rendered as instructive as the adventures of a hero ; but not by *confounding* their *irreconcilable* characteristics.

When a biographer avoids these errors, and remains alike faithful to truth and to delicacy, his labours may be classed among the most instructive studies, provided he be sufficiently guarded against the prevailing error of dilation. Of late years, books seem to be infected with the disease of the enchanted helmet of Otranto; and have taken to such an enormous heaving and swelling, that many sage prognosticators foretel that they will certainly overwhelm the castle of literature. Conscious that my own labours have somewhat contributed to this stupendous mass,
I will

I will confine my censures to a species of publication in which at *present* I *have clean bands*. The *private* letters of deceased public characters, promise to furnish such an inexhaustible supply of materials to the gormandizing appetite of readers, that it is indeed doubtful (if we may, without irreverence, apply the words of inspiration to another subject) “whether the “world will contain the books that *will* “be written.” Nothing can be better calculated to gratify those who *devour* rather than *digest* reading, than fragments happily rescued from the lumber garrets, and escaped the brooms of house-maids and the fury of cooks ; for the *majority* of these compositions will never prove the least burden to the memory, and must at every perusal possess all the charms of novelty, save that of being wet from the press. When the *confidential* communications of *really* eminent people are thus

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forced

forced into notice, we may call it the most barbarous method of assassinating literature that has ever been invented ; for it is compelling the dead to murder their own reputation, and enjoining the living to restrain all those ebullitions of the heart which give value to friendly correspondence. It is strange, that conscience does not operate as a check upon this book-making propensity. The suggestions of a literary friend are too sacred to be exposed to vanity ; nor should a page of a deceased author be committed to public view, which we are convinced the writer intended to consign to oblivion. Surely, to do so is as indecorous as to tear the decaying body from the concealing grave, and to exhibit its humiliating corruption. Let those whose eager curiosity is gratified by these perusals, put themselves in the place of the writer, and then decide on the rectitude and delicacy of these exposures.

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The history of the globe that we inhabit, unquestionably holds the next place to the study of the nature, duties, and actions of mankind. Voyages and travels, illustrated by a competent acquaintance with geography and natural history, form a most instructive branch of literature, extremely well calculated to improve and inform the understanding of our sex; for here, as I before observed of history, we must generally be contented to know things by report, instead of actual observation. It is much to be lamented, that this species of knowledge, like natural philosophy, has been used as a medium for conveying the poison of deism; and that nature, in this instance also, should be so misrepresented as to make her *speak* a language *hostile* to revelation. Those pests of society, the illuminized philosophists of anarchy, have still further soiled the pure page of science, by the

introduction of descriptions at which chastity would revolt, and have shewn themselves such hardy advocates of depravity, as to sacrifice unity of design to the desire of contaminating others. There are, however, many works of this kind *exempt* from these strong objections; and a young woman in easy circumstances cannot, without gross ignorance, neglect a branch of information which brings her acquainted with the world of which she is an inhabitant.

The adventures of travellers and sailors are often so extraordinary, and the vicissitudes and dangers to which they are exposed are so interesting, that I cannot help recommending this description of reading, to rouse the attention and correct the errors of those pitiable people, who are the victims of *imaginary* distresses. Spleen, ennui, chagrin, lassitude, and all the various train of miseries which extreme indulgence,

indulgence, dissipation, or romantic expectation, are apt to engender, must surely feel their own insignificance, and the absurdity of their petty woes, when they accompany a Byron around the barren shores of Terra del Fuego, in search of the spontaneous productions of penurious nature ; or sail with an Inglefield in an open boat, almost destitute of food, across the wide expanse of the Atlantic ocean. Is it really such a misery to be left out of a pleasant party, to have a dinner spoiled, or a gown ill-made ? Look at Alexander Selkirk on his solitary island, divided, as the experience of many an annual fun had told him, from human society, and exposed to the horrid prospect of perishing for want, when decrepitude should prevent him from employing his bodily agility in procuring his daily food. Contemplate the heroical associates of Cook at their *loathed* repast ; yet undauntedly persevering in the magnanimous

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mous design of ascertaining, whether the cheerless domains of the Antarctic Pole could add to the renown or strength of their country. Behold the brave Ledyard, or the patient Park, naked, sick, and destitute, in the wilds of Samojedia, or the morasses of Bambara. Remember that they had bodies and minds framed of the same materials with your own; blush at disguising your fastidious selfishness under the name of sensibility, and lift up your eyes to Heaven in pious gratitude at your *happier* lot.

From fact and moral illustration, let us now turn to the regions of fiction; where, with your permission, I will endeavour to draw a brief contrast between ancient and modern romance, as far as it may be supposed to be connected with national character. That fair assemblage of loveliness, peace, simplicity, and purity, which youthful poets used to paint, and Surreys and
Sydney

Sydneys pursued, has now deserted the ideas of the bard and romancer. I scarcely dare confess the partiality which I feel for the exiled muses, or lament that, unless they are devoted to some local or far-castical subject, they can scarcely be *endured* by the fair languid student, even during the moment when “her gentle
 “foubrette tastefully arranges her braided
 “tresses,” or folds in seeming negligence the undulating flow of her drapery. Modern discoveries have clearly ascertained, that it was a geographical absurdity to suppose that Arcadia ever formed a part of Old England; and the removal of this region of disinterested love and pure sentiment has been followed by the banishment of all its inhabitants. Nymphs and swains, dancing fauns, and piping satyrs, all have vanished, together with those invaluable tokens of inviolable attachment, “true lovers knots,” and “crooks be-
 u 6 “studded.”

"studded" around. We are become so much more enlightened than our immediate predecessors, that I question whether Maid Marian would now condescend to accept a garland of vale flowers from Coln Clout, without informing him that Miss Betty Blackberry laughed at all flowers which were not made by the milliner.

The fair *imager* of the present day is formed upon the model of some lovely heroine, whose name runs through five syllables of vowels and liquids, and whose character and endowments are a compendium of the wonderful. She is either born in very high life, or by some happy arrangement gets among Dukes, Earls, and Lords, or, it may be, a Prince or two, by way of variety; where she vanquishes a sufficient number of hearts, and loses her own to some very rich and exemplary man, with whom it is necessary she should have a vast many misunderstandings;

ings; sometimes arising from mistakes, and sometimes from the villany of rivals or relations. Either the gentleman or the lady must be sure to lose a fortune; but then they must also (do what is so very common in real life) find a much greater *unexpectedly*. They must also be very near dying; but this must be about the end of the sixth volume, by way of smoothing all difficulties to the marriage ceremony, which takes place in the seventh, and dismisses the unparalleled pair to *certain* felicity; the *eventful* part of their lives being now *over*, they are only to frisk like lambs or coo like doves.

It may indeed happen, that the costume of the romance may change, and the heroine be conducted through the enchanted labyrinth of gothic scenery and adventure, instead of summer bathing-places and winter galas. Here it will be necessary to produce *less* embarrassment and *more* misery.

tery. If there be less edifying conversation, the reader will be oftener chilled by horror and petrified with astonishment. She will here recognize many old acquaintance; the modern valet and pert chambermaid will be antiquated in nothing but dress and name. Parents and rivals will retain their inveterate obliquity; and the grand requisites, an unexceptionable lover and a splendid fortune, will never be omitted. Few studies would be more improving than the perusal of a familiar fictitious narrative really written in days of yore. To know how the belles of antiquity thought, talked, and acted*, would afford an exquisite treat to (I hope not irreverent) curiosity; but we can derive but little gratification from seeing the luxurious, sentimental, philosophizing fe-

* The Memoirs of Agrippina might here be commended as a sufficiently faithful transcript of ancient manners, but they aspire to still higher applause.

male of the eighteenth century, placed in the bower-window, where, three hundred years ago, the Lady of the Castle “sat in
“pensive mood, and look’d o’er hill and
“dale.” Is it not like a Bond-street dress-maker attired in the stole of the empress Julia?

The higher walk of gothic narrative has been successfully occupied by a lady of real genius and informed judgment. She seems to have varied the eventful scene as far as our knowledge of other times will admit; but her power has been chiefly shewn in contriving mysteries so dreadful and inexplicable, that even her own fertile imagination can do no more than break the spell at once, as it is impossible to make the denouement fully gratify the soul-harrowing suspense by which it was preceded. I have suspected, that this writer, with all her appropriate knowledge of her subjects, felt the difficulty of supporting the propriety

priety of manners of which so few traits have been preserved; and therefore compressed the narrative part of her works, by bestowing more space on her descriptions of nature, which are always sublime and beautiful; though the reader feels them sometimes painfully suspend the progress of the story. This local painting is, however, descriptive of the manners of the times that she treats of, as well as of the unaltered face of rural beauty. In times of feudal grandeur, the solitary Baroness must (while her Lord was engaged in the sports of the chase, or the toils of war) have often amused her pensive hours by seeing the setting sun light up the autumnal foliage of the forest into a thousand glowing tints, or in tracing “the pale reflex of Cynthia’s brow” on the fullen waters of the lake. But to return from this digressive commendation.

What

What effect, shall we enquire, has the general turn of fictitious adventure on an age in which *every* young woman reads, and *many* confine their knowledge to this species of misinformation? Does it teach them what things *have been*, or what things *are*? Certainly not, for such beings and such an order of things, never did nor ever can exist. Parents are quite as apt to judge rightly for their children, as children are to form a proper estimate of what is good for themselves; and the chance between the *disinterestedness* of paternal affection, and that of him who plays the lover's part, is in favour of the former. Heroes and heroines, or, in plain English, men and women, never did possess such an accumulation of splendid graces and virtues as are collected together in these false prisms. The unreasonably suspicious lover is sure to make an unreasonably jealous husband. Violent attach-

attachments are either never lasting, or the source of unhappiness, being always accompanied with painful irritation of mind. Suitable offers of marriage occur too rarely, for a young woman to expect more from the majority of her followers, than that evanescent admiration which is paid to all who have the reputation of fortune, wit, or beauty. Virtue is more severely tried by a *multiplicity* of petty evils, than by *great* conflicts; and benevolence displays her heavenly nature by minute attentions; oftener, and with more beneficial effect, than by extraordinary exertions. Sudden reverses of fortune are unusual, and so are acts of great liberality. Adventures *rarely* happen to a prudent woman, and *never* without injury to her reputation. Licitious intentions are seldom formed without a prospect of success, and the most hardened rake may be awed by unassuming discretion;

“ In part, she is to blame who has been tried,

“ He comes too near, who comes to be denied.”

The first motions of evil may be *resisted*, if the thoughts be not permitted to stray towards an *unlawful* object, or to *ponder* on the means by which wicked ends may be *accomplished*. They who trifle with temptation expose themselves to the danger of defeat, and deserve the ruin which they sustain. Marriage may be said rather to open than to close the eventful period of female life ; since it is by that means that we enter on a scene of enlarged usefulness, activity, and responsibility ; nor is marrying the man whom we fondly love an invulnerable protection from the shafts of sorrow ; perhaps it is oftener a ready inlet to the pangs of disappointment, or the cares of solicitude.

I could write volumes to expose those false views of human life, which doubtless have accelerated that change of female
manners

manners which we all see and deplore. Had not so much idolatrous incense been offered to beauty, grace, and nymph-like elegance; had so many fascinating descriptions never been given of the pleasures, enjoyments, and advantages of rank and fortune, the elegantes of humble life would have been far less numerous, and we should have retained some valuable stuff, capable of being converted into the wives of traders and yeomen. Let not those who confine themselves to this style of reading make a merit of having been *at their books*. Mischievous reading is worse than unsophisticated ignorance.

It would, however, be culpable fastidiousness, and gross injustice, to involve all fictitious narrative in this severe censure. A species of writing, that is enriched by the compositions of many of our most distinguished moralists and sages, cannot be undeserving of a particular attention

tention from the most liberal and well-informed mind. While, therefore, we stigmatize the reptile brood who annually vivify with the summer heat, as at once the *offspring* and the *food* of idleness ; let us acknowledge, that next to those moral essays which breathe the wisdom of a Johnson or the suavity of an Addison, a well-written novel is the best introduction to the knowledge of life and manners, and may justly claim to be the associate, but not the substitute, of graver studies. It has lately been denied, that Richardson painted manners as they really were ; his moral excellence will, however preserve him a place in the esteem of every well-principled reader ; and his pathetic and descriptive powers will enchain attention, while his piety must transfuse some devout sentiments into the most cold and worldly bosom. You will observe, that I confine this commendation to his *Clarissa* and *Grandison*.

ment of ideas, which characterized the happiest efforts of the muse in her days of exaltation. The popularity of Cowper's poems has doubtless contributed to this happy change; in which the sterling grandeur of the thought, and the exquisite appropriateness of the imagery, compensates for carelessness of expression, or occasional untunableness of the measure. We must, however, lament that the peculiar turn of his religious principles deprives this charming poet of his natural gentleness, whenever the Clergy of the Church of England, or our system of public education, falls within the reach of his observations.

But though we hail with rapture the auspicious omens of a purer taste in poetry, the times are for ever vanished which sanctioned the allegorical triumphs of Orpheus. Good verse requires *consideration*; without which, it is *impossible* to appreciate
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a loss what to say publicly on what I know is your favorite reading. The muses have been charged with doing very serious mischief to us females ; but I confess that I think their crimes have been exaggerated, or at least that they were less faulty than the compositions which have supplanted them. They rarely ventured out of the world of imagination ; and few readers would be so green in judgment, as to mistake their language for that of real life. The modern muse has been accused of incurring the guilt of democracy : it is allowed, that even her genuine offspring have ever strung their lyres to the high key of liberty ; but then it was to that liberty which is *consistent* with *order*, *justice*, and *virtue* ; those cherished feelings of every real lover of this charming science. But we must also observe, that an alien colony, whose members have for ages been endeavouring
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to *scramble* up the heights of Parnassus by bye-roads, and who very much resemble monkies, not only in their style of climbing, but in the art of *degrading imitation*, have produced nothing but "scrannel notes" from the bladder and string, which they would persuade us is the genuine harp of Tyrtæus. These certainly, to speak in the voice of a true votary of Phoebus, "mean licence when they cry liberty*". The dreadful acts of anarchy which this age has witnessed, have also rather untuned the public ear for the song of freedom; and made us *suspect* danger, where our ancestors would only have *felt* rapture. I am not apologizing for the discordant bards of faction, whose jejune malice I at once detest and despise. I am only supposing it *possible*, that the glowing visions of a vivid imagination may have occasioned some inad-

* See Milton's Sonnets.

vertent

vertent fallies, which the temper of the times renders dangerous ; and the consequences of which the writers themselves, when the “ fine frenzy” of imagination subsides, will be the first to deplore.

Of late years (except in the political light which we have just noticed) poetry has rarely deserved the reproach of misleading the passions ; being mostly either descriptive, didactic, or metaphysical. In the hand of a Hayley or a Seward, it has successfully shewn its capability of forcibly narrating domestic incidents, or elucidating critical research. Its power of analyzing metaphysical properties has been successfully proved by Rogers and Campbell. The turgid attire of bombastic epithet, and the cold uninteresting accumulation of abstract ideas, so lately puffed into fashion, seems yielding to that force of feeling, elegant simplicity of expression, and lucid yet elevated arrange-

ladies are really innocent ; that the things to which I allude, whether I call them “ phyfic or farces” were made to be seen and fold, not to be read and remembered ; and therefore they are improperly introduced under the title of female *studies*. I stand corrected, and will only detain you with a few remarks on the dramatical remains of former times.

Few cenfors are fo rigid as to prohibit the beft efforts of the tragic mufe ; and unquestionably the pages of Shakspeare, independent of the coruscations of *genius*, beam with the unclouded blaze of *moral* splendour. The like may be faid of the pure untainted plays of Thomson, whose chafte and classic fcenes muft ever delight in the clofet. Nor do the ftronger colouring and warmer paffions of Rowe mislead his readers from the hallowed fhine of virtue, though he frequently facrifices nature to description and declamation. A
writer

Writer would deserve much from the public, who should purify the mixed dramas of Otway and Southerne, and preserve what genius has immortalized, without its nauseous and poisonous alloy. Our early comedies deserve and require a similar purgation; but in many, *excision* will not be sufficient; the plot, as well as the language, must be reformed, to make them *safe* companions. It is much to be lamented, that a conviction of these faults has not operated upon our present race of writers, further than to make them verbally modest. While blasphemy retains the place of indelicacy, we may rather talk of change than reformation. We have little cause of exultation on the score of morality in design; and when we inquire after that spirit of genius which gives a zest to these compositions, we must acknowledge that its subtle nature has evaporated through the flimsy texture

of modern composition. In probability, character, and wit, the mortifying difference is too discernible. Some favourable appearances in the theatrical world have lately excited a hope that we are entering on a more auspicious æra; and even in what I may term the *Vandalism* of our dramas, a few successful efforts will deserve your attention; though not equal, in number or excellence, to those which were produced when theatrical taste was at once embellished and regulated by the histrionic powers and intelligence of a Garrick.

You will ask me, if I allow the stage to be such a faithful copy of living manners, as to permit scenic exhibitions to influence our judgements. In general, certainly it is not; characters and events must be *exaggerated* in order to stimulate attention. Those pieces which copy the more delicate touches of sentiment and incident, seldom afford enough of situa-
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tion and effect to please in the representation, though for the former reason they are the best closet companions. It is only the province of care and superior genius to combine impression and simplicity; and even these catch the best likenesses when they paint the soul in a storm of passion. Dramatical reading, therefore, should neither *precede* nor *exclude* those just views of men and things, which moral, historical, and geographical knowledge, cannot fail to produce. As guides in our progress through life, we must consider that they lie under all the disadvantages which Dr. Priestly ascribes to fictitious narratives; but I think that those plays which are removed from the manners and language of common life are less likely to mislead than novels, which ever affect the garb of true narrative, and sometimes actually profess to describe real events. I recommend a select assortment of plays, as an

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improvement to your taste, as capable of storing your memory with elegant and improving ideas, and as a corrective to that dull monotony and rigid contraction of conversation which characterises mere *matter of fact* readers.

Works of humour, whether satirical or playful, come next to be considered ; and here again I am fearful that my observations may betray more of *attachment* than *judgment*. I would, however, avert all just censure, by strictly prohibiting every composition in the smallest degree infected by indelicacy, ribaldry, or profaneness. My motive for recommending mirthful productions is, to check the extreme acuteness of sensibility, which our sex is apt to indulge at the expence of our repose ; and which is best corrected by the admission of lively ideas. Our propensity to run into the absurdities of sentiment, makes it dangerous for us to read much
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of what is addressed to the imagination and the passions, without applying to those powerful antidotes of romance, humour, and satire. I know you will not ask me, whether it would be adviseable to prohibit all writings of the former tendency ; because you will perceive that it is austerity, not prudence, which interdicts us from partaking of a delicious fruit, lest our gratified appetite should gorge to surfeit. A bright imagination, a glow of generous sentiment and polished and correct expression, are all parts of the character of an accomplished female ; diversity of idea, and playful allusion, may also claim admission into this charming groupe of sister graces.

Well-principled ridicule has often done infinite service to the cause of good sense. Even virtue and religion have received considerable benefit from its sparkling darts ; and in the opinion of an eminent

vantes ; we have many happy instances of the power of wit in our own country. To confine our observations to the more modern, that spirited pamphlet, entitled Anticipation, compelled the great opposition leaders of those times to change their mode of attack, and to use more nicety of *selection* in the quality and quantity of the *lumber* by which they clogged the wheels of government, lest they should be cried down for plagiarism ; and it is observed, that brevity, and application, have since been preferred to rhetorical flourishes, in this species of oratorical warfare. Poetry has derived infinite advantages from the celebrity of the Baviad ; which proved as fatal to the Della Cruscan, as the Loves of the Triangles did to the Darwinian phraseology. No specific object seems to be pursued in the play of the Critic ; but it is well worthy of the talents of a Sheridan to *write down* modern.

dern dramas ; and I have too much respect for that gentleman's *taste* to believe that he would avoid so fair a victory because some of his own later offspring may appear among the "small infantry" which his giant spear could easily overthrow.

I shall infallibly expose myself to the snare of some vigilant opponent, who lies perdué to catch me tripping, by naming politics as a suitable subject of female study. If I proposed loading your table with controversial pamphlets, journals, replies, observations, queries, and all the ephemeral publications to which local circumstances ascribe consequence, and which posterity tosses to oblivion, I would submit to be the subject of all the good things that ever have been said on petticoated quidnuncs. But I am not disposed to withdraw you from the pure founts of Siloa and Aganippe, to plunge you into the puddle of party contest, from which our sex
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is happily fenced off; I say *happily*; for certainly the most steadfast virtue, and the greatest tranquility and constancy of soul, can scarcely hope to escape *uncontaminated* from the infectious contact of public life.

But though we are excused from undergoing the labours and difficulties of statesmen and warriors, I trust that the affections and duties of a patriot are not inimical to the female character. If our tender feelings are excited by the objects around, we must love our country in which those objects subsist. The scene of our early delights, present enjoyments, and future hopes, must be dear to us, even on selfish considerations. And could we willingly behold those scenes defaced; could we, without an almost mortal pang, contemplate the desolation of what is pleasant, and the loss of what is dear? Is there really in nature such a sensation as *solitary unconnected* enjoyment; could we be happy
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in a lonely wild, or a dreary cavern, from which we had no prospect to escape; and what is this world, but a cave or wilderness, when all that habit rendered agreeable, or attachment made necessary, is gone? We love, then, that community with which we are connected; and by analogy that spot of earth where we act and move. This spot is our country; this community our fellow-citizens, with whom we have inherently contracted an indissoluble league, and formed an obligation to mutual aid and affection.

Let us here recal to our more serious consideration those awful motives, which, though I trust not *contrary* to, were yet not so *intimately* connected with, the subjects that we have just discussed, and consider our relation to society, according to the views and motives of religion. And as it is impossible to practise our duty without understanding it, a knowledge of
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the principles of government, and the peculiar construction and advantages of our own, are indispensably necessary to all who would act as they ought to their king and their country, their superiors and inferiors, their equals, their children, and their servants. This sort of information differs *in toto* from the party discussions of the day, and seems our best preservative from those confined politics which both degrade and debase the female character.

Holy writ informs us, that gradations of rank proceed from the good pleasure of the Almighty, who founded universal happiness and security, in mutual want and dependance. No one is rich, powerful, or exalted, for their own sake; predominance in any worldly advantage always includes increased responsibility; and they who misuse greatness are fearfully amenable as treacherous betrayers of a sacred trust. But considering the more
numerous

numerous temptations to which eminence of any kind is exposed, it may justly require to have its actions viewed with candour, and that it should be *assisted* rather than *counteracted* in all its *salutary* purposes. Scripture gives us precisely this view of our duty as subjects, and enforces it by the peculiar obligations of Christianity*. Of this we will speak hereafter; let us now remark, that since the limits of power are so circumscribed, and its obligations so numerous, it seems rather a trial to be *dreaded*, than a good to be *sought*. Hereditary rule may appear to a recluse observer a contrivance to enforce the assumption of painful pre-eminence, instead of a defence against the encroachments of unqualified intrusion. The fruit of “the accursed tree” has, however, so

* See Romans, 13th chapter, and 1st Peter, 2d chapter, on Christian obedience, as proceeding from a sense of duty to God.

intoxicated

intoxicated mankind, that though, to a well-disposed mind, "obedience is ease," many determine that "to reign is worth ambition, even in Hell." When power is pursued by undue means, there is every reason to apprehend that it will be misapplied; hence the perversity of mens hearts renders it necessary to secure magisterial and regal authority from the grasp of the multitude on the one hand; and on the other, to restrain power within those salutary limits, which may prevent it from assuming such undue weight as would enable it to crush those whom it was intended to protect.

The excellency of the British constitution, in all the fundamental points of right government, is acknowledged. It secures personal liberty and private property; it renders the peasant, as far as relates to his domestic situation, as secure as the sovereign; and it precludes the
sovereign

sovereign himself from infringing the right of the subject. Liberty is well defined to be, not the power of doing what you please, for that is licentiousness, but the security that others shall not do as they please with you. Holy writ furnishes memorable examples of the miseries that ensued from “every man’s doing that which “was right in his own eyes*.” A more striking view of the changeable humour of a mob, and the blind turbulence of popular commotion, cannot be given, than what was exhibited in the last scenes of our Lord’s life, or in the trials which his faithful apostle Paul experienced at Lystra and Ephesus.

Your historical pursuits will explain to you the advantages which our political constitution possesses beyond what any

* Judges, 17th chapter, 6th verse; 21st chapter, 25th verse.

other nation can boast ; and your attachment to this your country will consequently become infinitely stronger, through the obligations of preference and gratitude, than what early habits or casual residence could impose. Contemplated as the sacred inclosure which embraces and protects one of the fairest scions of the church of Christ, our love should strengthen with our faith ; and though our preference should carefully avoid that narrowness of sentiment, which hates or despises every thing foreign, we should feel our interests and hopes so interwoven with the welfare of our native land, as to be incapable of separation, Patriotic attachment, forms a marked feature in the character of those worthies of old who are recorded in holy writ. And the Saviour of the World, by condescending to imbibe this predilection for the soil in which he was born and suffered,

ferred*, has most effectually rescued the genuine feelings of the patriot from the undeserved reproach of prejudice and narrowness of soul. The citizen of the world, who affects to despise distinctions which the Lord of Life has sanctioned, may well be reproved in the spirit of St. John's re-tort to the uncharitable, "If ye love not
 " what ye have seen, how can ye love
 " what ye have not seen?"

But how shall women show their love to their country? They cannot fight its battles, nor direct its counsels; their purses are seldom at their own disposals, and their actions are circumscribed, not only by physical, but by civil restrictions; they can only devote their wishes and their prayers to the service of the commonweal. Allowing that we could do nothing more, we should then be better than pas-

* Yet Christianity has been defined to be incompatible with the character of a patriot. How much has our faith been injured by injudicious defences!

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and though in that case the good must suffer with the sinful, yet if we consider that there will come a day of *individual* restitution, the divine attribute of justice is no way implicated by this proceeding. Beside, as we are all offenders, the best of us may be considered but as stray sheep, who need these heavenly warnings to be recalled to the fold. National sins, therefore, do not mean the sins of our governors, as some most perversely misrepresent; but the collective offences of individuals. That we have “been blessed
 “beyond other nations in a greater share
 “of the light of the gospel, in wise and
 “just laws, in a mild and yet vigilant government, in internal peace and opulence, and in external renown and prosperity,” is most true. That we have improved these blessings as we ought to have done, is more than doubtful. Insubordination daily gains ground; and
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what is insubordination, but rebellion against the *providential* government of God ; for in the language of holy writ, “ what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him*?” Indifference as to the principles of religion, and laxity in performing the duties which it enjoins, become more and more evident in the manners of all classes. The habit of referring all events to second causes, than which nothing is more opposite to the principles and feelings of a Christian, increases ; and luxurious indulgence and inordinate attachment to worldly pleasures, are the characteristics of the times. These are sins for which our rulers are no otherwise accountable, than as they *commit* them ; and they who, in precept and practice, steadily endeavour to abate their prevalence are most truly *patriots* ; prevent-

* Numbers, 16th chapter, verse 11th.

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ing, as far as is in their power, the ruin which such self-created tyrants will bring on the people who willingly submit to their galling yoke.

When I recommend regard to order, condescension, pious sentiments, regular conduct, and temperance in pleasure, to my sex, I certainly act in perfect conformity to our pristine character; which, unless corrupted by evil habits and examples, *predisposes* us to whatever is calm, amiable, and of good report. In our relative situation, as mothers and mistresses of families, we possess so much influence, that if we were uniformly to exert it in the manner which the times require, we might produce a most happy change in the morals of the people; and in peril of being thought superstitious, I avow my firm belief, that such a change would conduce more to extricate us from our present difficulties, than the wisdom of our counsellors, or the valour of our fleets
and

and armies. We should, however, equally avoid resting in the arm of the flesh, like a self-dependent worldling, and supposing, like a presumptuous fanatic, that the sword of the spirit is the only weapon that we have permission to use. The lawfulness of even defensive war has been denied by many (I hope sincere, but I am sure ill-judging) Christians; who forget that our Blessed Lord never could mean to revoke one of those first laws of our nature, which himself, in the character of our Creator, imposed upon us, and the necessity of which he experimentally proved; I mean [the law of self-defence. The precepts which his eminent forerunner gave respecting the conduct of military men, the frequent allusions to a state of warfare in the apostolical writings, and the practice of the earliest converts, many of whom were soldiers, and certainly did not renounce their military duties on com-

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mencing

menacing Christians; all these considerations must decide the question in the opinion of reasonable people. When we consider that it is *impossible* to prevent violence and aggression, otherwise than by resistance; and that when once the flood-gates of war are opened, circumstances must decide whether we shall content ourselves with restraining it within its banks, or attempt to turn its wasteful current on hostile plains; we must rather pity the weakness of those who could perplex themselves with such scruples, than admit that they are founded on the word of God.

But is not war an evil? Certainly, or it would not be denominated the sword of the Lord. Should it not be avoided, if possible? Unquestionably, it should. Go and humble thyself before God for those sins which deserve such a chastisement. But are not our rulers the mediate causes
of

of this calamity? I speak not of past but of present times, and answer No. The predicted spirit has arisen out of the bottomless pit, who "is presumptuous, disobedient, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities." If you doubt the fact, look at the state of your own household, at the dress, conversation, and conduct of your servants. Observe the air of equality, or the lower of discontent, which you may see even in those rustic countenances, who used to greet you with the smile of respectful attachment. Consider the alarming combinations in various trades; not that workmen may possess the means of *subsisting* their indigent families, but that a larger portion of every week may be *allotted* to idleness and intemperance. Contemplate the universal thirst for political knowledge, the irreverence with which the most elevated characters are spoken of; and, above all, re-

Reflect on the probable consequence of two opinions which are almost universal among the lower orders; namely, that in this land of liberty every man may do as he pleases, and that he has a right to choose his civil governors and spiritual instructors.

Permit me to enforce my opinion respecting the folly of the higher orders countenancing the growth of democracy, by quoting the authority of a scholar whom every party reveres; I mean Sir William Jones. After observing, that
 “ the original form of our constitution is
 “ almost divine, to such a degree that no
 “ state of Greece or Rome could ever
 “ boast one superior to it, nor could Plato,
 “ Aristotle, nor any legislator, even con-
 “ ceive a more perfect model of a state,”
 he proceeds: “ What can be more dif-
 “ ficult to devise, than a constitution
 “ which, while it guards the dignity of
 “ the

“ the sovereign, and the liberty of the
 “ subject, from any incroachment, by the
 “ influence and power of the nobility,
 “ preserves the force and majesty of the
 “ laws from violation by popular liberty.
 “ This was the case formerly in our
 “ island, and would be so still, if the folly
 “ of some had not prompted them to spur
 “ on the populace, instead of holding
 “ them in.” The times that he alludes
 to were, when Wilkes was the *still burning*
 volcano of sedition : but the folly that he
 reprobates has since alarmingly increased ;
 and party, of late, has never scrupled to
 excite a contempt for those principles,
 which must yet form the foundation of the
 power that it wishes to assume. Is there
 not reason to think, that the continental
 wars in which we have been engaged, al-
 most during the whole of his present Ma-
 jesty’s reign, were *providentially* necessary
 to drain off these violent humours of the
 y 5 nation,

nation, by devoting those corrupt members of society to the sword in a *foreign* climate, who, had they continued at home, might probably have kindled the still more destructive flames of *civil* war.

Maternal tenderness is apt to urge objections to war, which state necessity cannot successfully combat, unless in cases of near and immediate danger. Unquestionably, much consideration is necessary, before we devote our sons to the military profession, without *knowing* that they have a *decided* predilection for that dangerous but honourable occupation; but when it is *their choice*, it behoves us to practise the duty of acquiescence. Since it is judged necessary, that during the present awful aspect of continental affairs, every young man should sufficiently understand the use of arms, to be assisting in defending his native shores in case of attack, it is to be hoped that maternal timidity will
never

never check the operation of a measure, which, though (if followed up with that steady resolution which can alone make it of real utility) it includes privation, bodily fatigue, and even danger, the sacred call of public duty imperiously enjoins. Our tender solicitude for the welfare of our offspring may be most judiciously exerted, in fortifying the young volunteer against those temptations to excess and licentiousness, which must ever attend numerous associations of young men removed from parental inspection or controul, and exposed to the enticements, or still more dangerous sarcasms, of practised debauchees. A serious mind must ardently pray, that the unparalleled bravery and public spirit which the rising hope of England has shewn at this memorable period, may not be so perverted as to render “ the thing which should have
 “ been for our health an occasion of fall-

“ing,” by still further provoking the God of Hosts, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

To those whose anxious fears now follow a beloved relation to the post of danger on some hostile plain, or iron-girt coast, I would suggest one trite, but not puerile reflection. Death is the inevitable lot of all; therefore they who fall in battle do but prematurely resign a mortal existence which a few years must have closed, and probably by a more agonizing mode of termination. The pangs of mortal disease, or that slow and painful death which attends old age, seems more appalling to the feelings of nature, than the excruciating but swift hand of violence. Dr. Paley has successfully proved, that Providence, by ordering one species of animal life to subsist by preying upon another, ordained the most *merciful* way of ending a being in which the seeds of dissolution

dissolution were indubitably sown. A hospital presents as pitiable a sight as a field of battle; I mean as far as relates to human misery. It is true, the latter does not admit of those kind ministrations of attentive sympathy which appear so exquisitely precious; but whoever has stood by the bed of pain, disease, or death, must have felt, in every fruitless wish and thrilling fear, how very little we can do in lightening the heavy burden of *extreme* bodily distress. Perhaps, when we wipe the faint dew from the languid face, convey some small drop of sustenance into the speechless mouth, or smooth the pillows under the restless head, the self-engrossed sufferer perceives not our assistance, or even feels his anguish heightened by our solicitude.

But I have in some measure wandered from my subject: let me regain the unravelled clue, by observing, that the increase

crease of sound principles and Christian practice will expedite the time “when
 “nation shall not lift up the sword against
 “nation, neither shall they learn war any
 “more.” The Millenium, to which piety looks forward, is not founded on that equalization of station and authority, which the frantic adorers of King Jesus pleaded as an excuse for licentiousness or rebellion; nor is it the reign of the goddess Reason, to whom infidel anarchists blasphemously sacrificed their Christian hopes. If the period, so often described in prophecy, *really* relate to the *temporal* rule of our Blessed Redeemer, those who “have rebelled against their” earthly “king,” and sat in judgment on him, must expect to be exiled from the peaceable region of order and perfect righteousness, and to be consigned to *punishment*, not reward, either in that triumphal state of the true church of God, or at the
 great

great day of final account, when we shall all be questioned how we have obeyed these precepts, "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake ; let every soul be subject to the higher powers ; for there is no power but of God."

The notices which revelation has given us of the future world, are, as we might expect them to be, few, mysterious, and impressivè ; such as leave no doubt as to its certainty and duration ; but so far invelope its pleasures and employments in figure and analogy, as to convince us that separate spirits and glorified bodies are engrossed by *different* pursuits, and capable of more *exquisite* delights, than we mortals can *conceive*. But, whenever the sacred page *incidentally* discloses a view of Heaven, it describes it as the seat of order and government, gradation of rank, supremacy, and obedience. "Thrones, do-
" minions,

“minions, principalities, and powers,” are the apostolical designations of angelic dignities. Our Lord declares, that “there are in his Father’s house many mansions;” *many* as to number, and to gradation too, according to the opinion of learned commentators. Every where Heaven is spoken of as a kingdom; God is described as its supreme sovereign, surrounded by innumerable hosts of ministring spirits, all blessed, glorious, and happy; but enjoying these advantages as the fruit of obedience and peace; and among these distinguished beings two are mentioned in the canonical books of Scripture, Michael and Raphael, to whom greater pre-eminence, and the honorable title of archangel, are assigned.

There cannot be a surer sign of the decay of religion in any country, than in a general inclination to give pagan virtues

tues* a preference over Christian graces. The precept of "Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of the Lord," seems to be universally renounced, for the injunction of, Maintain your own sacred rights. Are these duties incompatible? Is not obstinate resistance as likely to engender tyranny, as slavish obedience? There is an absolute necessity that some should rule; society cannot be held together without this bond. If, therefore, the subordinate parts will press upon the higher, authority must drop its *sceptre* and wield its *sword*. At all events, anarchy must be subdued, or the state will be annihilated. Compliance, by skinning over the surface, only enlarges the corroding ulcer, which putrifies underneath. A turbulent community never long preserved its freedom; it only exchanged

* The contrast between these is ably enforced in the *Memoirs of Agrippina*.

lawful

lawful and limited rulers for tyrannical usurpers.

The Church of England has been charged with enforcing the obligation of Christian obedience beyond the bounds of civil liberty. We have seen, that her public offices are undeserving of this censure; and it is unjust to accuse her on account of the tenets of some of her members or officials, who, in the heat of their opposition to the wild advocates of licentiousness, have sometimes, by extreme tenacity, injured the cause which they supported. The duty of our Sovereign, to govern us by the laws of this realm, is as decidedly recognized, as our obligation of obedience is positively determined. The question is, who is to be judge whether the prince observes or falsifies his engagements? and we may constitutionally answer, *Not the people*. An intermediate state exists, to whom, in cases of such

such emergency, both parties should appeal. Our history informs us, that a sovereign has been thus judged to have forfeited his high trust; and the remaining parts of our legitimate government (which certainly, during the interregnum, continued to be our lawful rulers) nominated the next in succession, against whom no plea of *ineligibility* could be urged, to fill the vacant throne; who on their parts promised observance of the constitution which they came to preserve. By this the people did not *choose* their ruler; but the *law supplied the vacancy* which had been caused by the misrule of the executive power. It is to the law of these realms, that the people owe allegiance. That law recognizes the king, not only as the fountain of authority, but as the determining ratifier, whose approbation converts legislative decisions into laws. His prerogative, therefore, is so knit together, and

and interwoven with our constitution, that we cannot respect the one, without reverencing the other, unless the king exposes himself to assault, by casting away the shield that rendered him invulnerable; the probability of which event has been decreasing ever since the Revolution. Should it again happen, that misguided royalty prefers usurped to constitutional power, the same steady regard to truth and justice, and attachment to the welfare of our beloved native land, that now calls upon us to *resist* the torrent of insubordination, will, we trust, rouse our posterity to defend those bulwarks which, unless betrayed by the baseness and venality of their natural guardians, must ever restrain the advancements of tyranny.

Having often remarked, how strongly the Scriptures impose the duty of obedience on subjects, it may not be unadvisable to observe, that they abound with
reproofs

reproofs to wicked rulers, and record several instances of approved resistance to cruelty and oppression*. St. Paul, especially, is distinguished for his bold assertion of his civil rights, and spirited opposition to injustice, though actually seated on the tribunal of legal power. Christian obedience, therefore, is not abject submission; but it is humility of mind. It is not thinking of ourselves highly, or only considering the *errors* of our governors, and our own *deserts*; but it is thinking soberly, making allowances for their failings, and acknowledging our own. It is giving "tribute where tribute is due," and "submitting to the ordinances of man;" not from fear, not from any sinister purpose, but "for the Lord's sake," with a thorough conviction that we owe the blessing of regular government

* Particularly 1st Kings, 21st chapter, verse 3d; and Genesis, 14th chapter.

to God, and that the obedience which we pay to the human representatives of his power, the earthen vessels in which the treasures of order, peace, and security, are deposited, is well pleasing in his sight. Such a conscientious attachment to our king and country, enlightened by historical knowledge, is as much political information as our sex requires. It will be a preservative from party violence, and from that agitating interest in local disputes which overpowers weak minds. It will put us upon our guard against the pseudo patriots, who use the welfare of the public, as a catch-word to persuade the deluded multitude to raise them to the lofty eyrie of greatness, from which they may successfully dart upon those to whom they owe their exaltation. For power, like the fountain of Lethe, has the infallible quality of inducing those who taste it with the habit of forgetting *former* friends
and

and *early* professions. As this has been the invariable conduct of all popular idols, nothing but the ignorance of their votaries can render it successful. Would we but look a little less at what is present, and more at what is past, we should scorn to be cheated by the method which distinguished the rebellion of a disobedient specious demagogue three thousand years ago*.

Having escaped out of the dangerous labyrinth of politics (may I hope with safety?) let me now enforce a caution which the last topic has brought to my recollection ; I mean, against the very common fault of confining your attention to new publications and local topics. I know that you are above the vanity of being thought a literary lady, which induces many a would-be Aspasia to toil through volumes of inanity, only that she

* 2d Samuel, 15th chapter, 4th verse.

may

may be said to read every thing that comes out. "Prince Posterity," as Swift humorously terms the future, is generally just to us scribblers; and it is as safe for those who have not much leisure to bestow on books, to wait till their value has been determined by his highness's preceptor, Time. What a mass of rubbish does every year consign to the trunk-maker! yet it is possible, that many of these defunct compositions were admired by many beside their *disastrous parent*. "The older an author is," says Howel, "commonly the more solid he is, and the greater teller of truth;" the reason is evident, the impartial censure of the public *annihilates* all others. The pleasure and the improvement which we derive from reading, consists in our preferring a well-digested selection; and even persons of the brightest understandings, who are compelled by their situation to read every

every thing, generally complain that their minds are retrograde in respect to useful or agreeable information.

There is a species of composition which is very popular, but should, in my opinion, only be sought for by those who have little leisure; and even then, since it is more useful to know a few things well, than to imbibe a confused jumble of every thing, even such readers might employ their time more advantageously; I speak of those works which go by the name of Extracts, Anecdotes, Beauties, and Anas. If to amuse be the object of the compilers of these olios, I fear they lose their aim, except with very volatile students; for you are scarcely permitted to be *interested* with one subject, before you are *hurried* to another, with an abruptness that rather *exhausts* than *exhilarates*. A beauty, torn from its native soil, often becomes a deformity, because a judicious writer always

contrives that situation should heighten the effect of his splendid passages. The bathos was never more strongly exhibited, than in an attempt to introduce some of Mrs. Ratcliffe's fine romances upon the stage. The incidents and characters are indeed *verbally* preserved; but the nice arrangement and preparation which rendered them striking, being considered by the dramatizer as *unessential*; of course, the same story which once harrowed up the soul, now convulses us with laughter.

Criticism is the last topic to which I shall call your attention, in what, I fear, my awful censors will call my "literary" "gossiping;" I mean if they should determine to bestow any castigation on a *battered* offender, who has often dared to utter a jest at their dread tribunals. Were I not afraid, that some one would discover me to be of a most malicious turn of mind, I should confess that it is a species of reading

ing

ing from which I derive uncommon pleasure. Learning, genius, and wit, cannot be more usefully employed, than when they officiate as porters at the temple of the muses ; but since it sometimes happens in these *evil* days, that people appoint themselves to this office, without having had their credentials signed by Phœbus, I would advise you, if you have a relish for this high-seasoned food, to apply to more than one caterer ; or you will, by depending on his bill of fare, encounter “ a crow in a perigord pie ;” I mean, that prejudice and party will so disguise an author, as either to prevent you from enjoying a mental luxury, or oblige you to swallow a nauseous composition. In these times of violent contention, party intrudes its cloven foot into every subject ; and works are estimated by every other rule than intrinsic merit. The public is, however, generally more just ; an

illiberal critique has seldom enough solidity to arrest the flight of genius ; and it rarely happens, that dulness can *long* soar on the plumage which partiality had supplied, though its efforts are assisted by the *puff direct*, as well as the *puff by implication*.

Periodical critiques have been thought unfavourable to the cause of literature. When the number of them was small, few people had access to more than one ; and as its decision was uncontroverted, its *dictum* was received as infallible ; but since this monarchy (or call it a triumvirate) has been split into petty principalities, the mighty whole resembles a fang-drawn lion, on which *we* literary mice may sport with impunity. Especially as, instead of a general union among the various departments of cenforial inquisition, they forget their common interest, and are not only rivals but enemies. At that important

ant æra, when, in the spirit of Turkish policy, criticism resolved to have “no brother near the throne,” the veil was drawn from the eye of the public, and the unerring sage sunk into the literary prize-fighter, who purchased renown by bastinading his competitors. From that happy moment, the natives of Grub-street, who were wont to stand silent to be pecked at, till their ferene tormentors were fatiated with looking at their bare anatomy, now chuckle and crow in their turn; for who is afraid of a *reviewed reviewer*? I beg pardon for thus frequently alluding to my own dear fraternity; the recollection of our sufferings must excuse a little triumph at our being for ever emancipated from our silent bondage, and permitted, like the slaves in the infernal regions, to lash the tyrants who once made us groan.

Since the opportunity of comparing various critiques effectually combats every objection that could be made on the score of prejudicing the mind, when your own principles are generally fixed, there is no danger in learning the character of a work from a journal opposite to your own notions, provided you keep an antidote at hand. You will thus be able to detect the excesses and false glosses of either party ; and discussion will prevent your *moderation* from degenerating into *lukewarmness*, or your *zeal* from evaporating into *extravagance*. This requires a solidity of judgment, to which I know you are equal ; the attempt, however, would be unsafe to our sex during their salad days. But beside periodical productions, which are unavoidably tainted with the imperfections incident to local discussions, we possess a mine of critical treasures, to whose sterling ore time has fixed
his

his indubitable attestation. Among the most valuable of these, we may rank the effort of female taste in defence of our national favourite Shakspeare, and the animadversions interspersed in the biographical labours of Johnson. Criticism also occupies a distinguished and instructive part of those periodical essays which I formerly recommended to your attention. Nor do I wish to confine my commendations of this branch of polite literature to the Augustan ages of the Spectator or the Rambler; living authors have added much valuable matter; and even in the ephemeral productions of the day we often meet with remarks replete with so much wit and ingenuity, as inclines a recluse observer to consider the national taste as being materially *improved*, notwithstanding the melancholy caveat which the degrading state of the *drama* enters against this *exhilarating* reflection.

Vapid

Vapid criticism is verbose and tedious ; but invective or adulation are its basest and most frequent faults. The popularity of this species of reading has certainly turned us into a nation of disputants and censors. Pope complains, that “ ten censure wrong, for one who writes “ amiss ;” and every author feelingly assents to the truth of this oracular declaration. But the character that I have been so long supporting, upon recollection, covers me with shame and terror ; since, however I might hope to escape under cover of my sex as an author, in my new character of critic I can expect nothing but the fate of the disastrous jackdaw, who ventured into an assembly of peacocks. I shall not, however, be stripped of *all* my borrowed plumage ; much of it belonged to *one who cannot now reclaim his own ideas*. The grave, which prematurely closed on as much genius, informa-

information, and taste, as can distinguish an individual, *effectually* conceals my plagiarism.

I shall conclude this letter by repeating a caution, which will certainly come unopportunately from one who speaks through the pigmy defile of twenty duodecimos. I mean, that valuable knowledge is not increased by incessant reading. One well-digested book will improve the mind and the heart more than many volumes hastily devoured for the purpose of saying that we have read them. This appetite for universal scholarship is rather increased by periodical annotators ; for they seem to suppose that it is reproachful, for any who pretend to literary taste, to be *unacquainted* with any *celebrated* work. I believe few people possess such clear heads, and retentive memories, as to be able to comprehend a long work at one perusal ; and few have sufficient leisure to bestow circumspect

unimpaired investigation on a great variety. A selection of sound authors of acknowledged merit is, therefore, most serviceable to general readers; for it is not the images of words passing before the eyes, but ideas imprinted upon the soul by the blended powers of memory and understanding, that can make us either better or wiser for our studies.

I remain, my dear Miss M——, &c.

END OF VOL. II.

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